VOLUME III NUMBER 2

THE WIND AND THE RAIN

Founded by Michael Allmand

EDITED BY NEVILLE BRAYBROOKE & JOHN LEATHAM

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AUDITORIUM

Auditorium will be a Review of the Theatre. It will not be published before 1947. In the meantime those who are interested in this publication as either prospective contributors or subscribers are asked to write direct to this Office for further information. It may be pointed out that the Editorial policy of this magazine will not be to poach on the ground already covered by *The Stage*, *The Playgoer* or *The Theatre World*. Instead it is intended that it shall deal with all those who have helped in the making of the history of the stage. Occasional articles on contemporary playwrights, actors and men concerned with the living theatre will be published.

TRANSLATION

Translation (*London*), under the editorsnip of Neville Braybrooke and Elizabeth King, will appear twice yearly from this year onwards. The first series (now on sale : price two shillings) has been dedicated solely to the publication of translated poetry, and includes translations from the work of Catullus, Horace, Petronius, Petrarch, Leopardi, Vicente, de Cetina, de Arce, Canedo, Alberti, Larreta, Banchs, Mollinari, Roxlo, Pedroni, Marechal, Borges, Lanuza, Ledesma, Ronsard, Tabureau, de Nerval, Baudelaire, Mallarmé, le Braz, Rimbaud, Verlaine, Maeterlinck, Vacaresco, Apollinaire, Cocteau, Aragon, Hölderlin, Heine, George, Rilke, Carossa, Uxkull, Marnau, Gazelle, Hertz, Stückenberg, Barfod, Pushkin, Lermontov, Fet and Sikelianos. The translators include Edmund Blunden, J. M. Cohen, John Heath-Stubbs, Allan M. Laing, Hugo Manning, Edward Marsh, John Ounsted, E. Allison Peers, V. de S. Pinto, R. C. Trevelyan, W. J. Strachan and Vernon Watkins. Later numbers in this series will be devoted to the publication of translations of short stories, diaries, letters and journals. As time goes on, the scope of this series will be widened to include the publication of longer translated works.

THE WIND AND THE RAIN

The Wind and the Rain will no longer be appearing as a Quarterly Review. Instead numbers will appear as often as possible—every effort being made to maintain four per year. The Editors regret making this decision, but owing to their presence in the Armed Forces they are faced with no alternative. Also, beginning with Volume III, it became part of the editorial policy of this Review to include a certain amount of translated work in each succeeding number.

All manuscripts submitted for any of the above publications must be accompanied by a stamped addressed envelope, if their return is desired. A verdict on all manuscripts sent will be given within one month.

PHŒNIX PRESS

EDITORIAL

IT is a quarter of a century since Oswald Spengler published his historical treatise, *The Decline of the West.* Yet despite this lapse of time it has lost neither its significance nor its influence upon the work of contemporary historians. For this reason alone it may be profitable to hazard an examination of its principal thesis, for the success which acclaimed its publication in 1920 has not fully abated: the same applause is given to the disciples as to the master himself.

Spengler, at the end of the last war, had lived through a period of general disillusionment, and perhaps because he was by profession a journalist, rather than an historian, the pessimism that had become so widespread throughout Europe struck him the more forcefully, as an individual, rather than as a spectator. He saw himself and his generation as the witnesses of the final disintegration of Western *culture,* in place of which was emerging what he termed *civilisation*—or at least the apothesis of it. To avoid quibbling at the outset it it is as well first to define what was Spengler's meaning of the word *civilisation.* For him the coming world was to be technical instead of lyrical: to be one of shipping instead of painting and of politics instead of epistemology. In such a world he envisaged the achievement of Socialism—but a Socialism, it must be confessed, that by its nature belonged more to the heritage of the imperialist than to either the dreaming idealist or revolutionary leader. Moreover, he believed that the cultural achievements of earlier ages could only be judged by the standards of the age which had given the particular culture birth: hence it sprang that he was able to present his theory of history, so to speak, in a series of water-tight compartments. Then to such deductions was added the conclusion that when society became fully materialistic in its conception of man, *culture* became transformed into *civilisation.* With the rapid decline of religious belief in England towards the end of the nineteenth century—a decline which the Oxford Movement had but temporarily checked—together with the universally revolutionary temper of Europe, it is not hard to see how Spengler, as a journalist, came to his confirmed belief that it was his duty to express the spirit of his age in his writings: from which it followed automatically that his outlook straightway became that of a Zeitgeist. Each philosophy, as he said, was an expression of its own age, and only of its age, and there were no two ages which possessed the same philosophical intentions. Again it was his conviction that the time had come when the dreams of the world reformers should become the tools of the men of action. To raise objections to this misguided and relativist reading of history is, with its increasing popularity among contemporary historians, an especially pertinent exercise for today.

In the diagnosis of such an historical approach it is always worth pointing out that after a major disaster in the world—and, in particular, when such a disaster has, to a great extent, been conditioned

by a lack of faith—mankind tends to take refuge in a form of mental defeatism. For instance, it will be one of the paradoxes of this century that the Allied nations, having rejoiced at the total victory which sprang from the fate of Hiroshima and Nagasaki, will live only to find that the defeat which they inflicted upon their enemy is reciprocal. Indeed, it is one of the marks of defeatism that it is caused not so much by humiliation, as by a desire to sacrifice any ideal—be it moral or spiritual—provided it can substitute in its place success with the world. Such a sacrifice, too, more often than not entails the surrender of both religious and cultural values, for religion and culture are inter-dependent one upon the other: they are, in a sense, aspects of the same thing. It was because Spengler failed to realise that the historical development of man was caused through an inter-religious and inter-cultural relationship that, in pursuing a relativist, as opposed to an absolutist, reading of history, his thesis ultimately came to be none other than a series of separate cultural processes. As an example of the sterility that evolves from this outlook one has but to consider some of the remarks made by politicians and statesmen during the last decade with regard to education.*

A few years ago the educational reformers, in their quest for a motivating force to govern the state school curriculum, decided upon biology as the still centre by which all knowledge might be interpreted: it was to be the new fount of wisdom. Then, this period of Freudian exploitation over (it still lingers on in disguised forms, for its death appears to be that of a dying fall), a physical interpretation of knowledge was meted out to the teachers of the country. One is tempted to ask here to what degree this biological-physical transformation in educational technique was produced by a sub-conscious envy of the outward health of the fascist and totalitarian youth movements. At any rate, the failure of these interpretations, together with the growing uneasiness which had been caused by the Munich crisis, gave way to the resurrection of a new saviour in the form of the British Empire. Finally, with the loss of Singapore, the new saviour was abandoned, and, ironical as it may sound, its place was taken by a series of lectures (not only for children this time, but also for adults) on the British way and purpose of life: these lectures were inaugurated with the hope that they might help to spread 'good citizenship.' This pitiful record of reforms to provide educational stimuli is but one example of many which springs from a relativist view of history, when on a smaller scale, as in education, each subject is hermetically sealed to the exclusion of any standard by which its content in relation to knowledge as a whole may be assessed. More generally, it may be said that for just over two centuries the natural sciences have, under the title of free thought, reigned supreme; unless the moral sciences, and more especially theology, are returned to their lawful place in education as the basis of learning, then all these attempted reforms will have been in vain:

* See *Some Aspects of Adult Education*, by Doreen M. Tulloch, Volume II, Number 3.

the lessons in citizenship that war is capable of teaching a country will have amounted to nothing. The state will have but succeeded in this—in making its citizens neither free nor capable of thought.

Then if, as has been shown, this era is one of disintegration—a subject which is further developed with regard to the Human Image by the writer whose essay follows this Editorial—it is necessary to discover not only the causes of such a state, but also what promotes and generates its continuance. At the moment the greatest danger comes from no particular political creed, but from a positive belief in Nihilism. And the active danger of the Soviet regime is not so much due to the fact that it is antagonistic to the political life of Europe, but because in its own country it has succeeded in believing in Atheism, without realising that the acknowledgement of such a faith is a belief in nothing; it has succeeded in changing the first article of the creed into an act whose faith is negative admission. It is because of this belief—which has now become so widely propagated in the world—that the paradox can be maintained that the denial of God has become a religion in itself. At first it is not easy to trace the emergence of such a doctrine to the Renaissance: Dostoievsky's comment that it is more easy for a Russian than for any other inhabitant of the globe to become an Atheist is geographically illuminating, but not satisfactory as a complete answer. Not until it is comprehended that Russian Atheism is humanism which has been divorced from the Incarnation, and that the Renaissance, while it did not specifically deny the Incarnation (it only ignored it), was free thought which had been divorced from Original Sin, can it be seen that the denial of these two principle dogmas of the Christian Church has led to an entire severance from any metaphysical interpretation of the nature of man. Again, what during the Middle Ages had been a spirit of renunication of life, in the fifteenth century became an attitude of acceptance of life: anonymity in art gave way to the projection of the personality of the painter, so that the purpose of art became the artist's reputation rather than that of the picture: alongside this change of attitude came a shift from religious symbolism to material realism. From this change, too, one can also derive the appearance of such autobiographies as that of Cellini and Cardano. These signs of the new spirit that was astir in the hearts of men gave way in the realm of philosphy to a neglect of the moral law and the introduction of nominalism. The emancipation of religion from culture had begun: with it there followed a cultural deterioration and, in a sense, from then onwards began the decline of the West.

Finally, if the *Weltanschauung* which Spengler saw enveloping *civilisation* is to be avoided, it will befall the Christian to show it was not a particular mark of the Middle Ages that with God all things were possible, but that it has always been one of the chief marks of Christian belief: indeed it is a belief whose organic truth has persisted with the same strength in the air-raid shelter as it did in the catacombs. However, the re-statement of this belief does not entail a resuscitation of mediævalism, but requires only that continuity of faith which, save for the Renaissance, would not stand in need

of such a re-emphasis. Yet the dangers which assail Christianity today, due to the Renaissance, become more than evident after examining Spengler's thesis. Because he was able only to interpret the effect that geographical features had upon man's nature, in contrast to Paul Vidal de la Blache,* he was unable to comprehend the triple relationship of geography, religion and culture, as a triad whose synthesis ultimately explained the true meaning of historical progress. To expect the historian to read history in any other light would be as foolish as to expect the mathematician to extend parallel lines that inter-crossed. Of the more obvious dangers that tend to beset the Christian, the most understandable one is, perhaps, what may be termed 'passive acceptance.' Behind a barricade of dogmas he retreats, knowing that on this earth a perfect society can never exist. But this is to evade the issue. Admittedly a perfect society cannot be achieved, but at least a healthy society may be established. To remain passive to the establishment of the latter is to suffer from sloth in virtue. Then again there is the danger of the Christian drifting with the tide of secularism—and seldom in history can the current have been as strong as it is now. Still, apart from these more apparent dangers, there are other forces also to be combatted. Not only is the biological view of man still to be found inherent in the educational sphere, but it is rapidly becoming the yard-stick of modern psychology and medical advice: in fact, it seems, every attempt is being made to present Christianity as an irrelevant source of knowledge to the main stream of learning. Again, there is the servile state which in regimenting the body destroys the spirit: and which, when it is remembered that the conquerors who have no faith are often conquered by those whom they have defeated, conjures up a particularly depressing prospect for the future. And again, there is always the danger of side-tracking the chief issues when it is a case of principle: the recent ethics applied to mass-bombing are adequate proof of what happens when expediency becomes synonymous with morality. Yet despite these discouraging omens, there are also signs for encouragement: the increasing return to Thomistic thought, and the publication of a book such as the Reverend E. L. Mascall's *He Who Is*: the growing number of anthologies and symposiums upon aspects of Christendom: the continual reprinting of the works of Maritain and Berdyaev, of Eliot and C. S. Lewis, of the late Charles Williams, and the commencement of an English translation of Solovyev. It might, however, be added at this point that it was surprising to note in a recent symposium, gathered from an eminent group of writers within the Church of England, that excellent as many of the essays on sociology were, there was a singular lack of emphasis upon the spiritual side of Christianity: on the need for prayer, example and charity. Yet without these attributes the Sermon on the Mount becomes meaningless. The reorientation for the Christian must always begin with Christ.

* See Volume III, Number 1.

THE DISSOLUTION OF THE HUMAN IMAGE

The Trend to Nature and the Trend to History

D. S. SAVAGE

THAT general interpretation of our historical epoch which, looking outwards and basing its assumptions upon external evidence, takes the view that man's history during the past three centuries has been one of progressive intellectual enlightenment and practical mastery, and which opens up even brighter vistas in the future, is being severely modified by the growing realisation that man's increasing power over his material environment has been accompanied by a profound inward retrogression and impoverishment. Taking an inward view, it is becoming plain that what we have witnessed and suffered in the West in the last three hundred years is in fact the *gradual disintegration of the human image.* From this viewpoint our present age of totalitarianism and total war appears as the final stage in a gradual process of the objectivisation and exteriorisation of man, initiated with the break away of Renaissance Humanism from the theocentric pattern of thought of the Middle Ages, and its assertion, impossible to maintain in its original integrity, of man as an independent, self-complete being. While it is undoubtedly to this particular movement of the human spirit that we owe our scientific and technical advances, it is to it also that we may attribute our spiritual deterioration or evisceration. And what shall it profit a man if he gain the whole world and lose his own soul?

For man to lose his image, however, he must first have found it. He found it, as a matter of fact, two thousand years ago, in the face of Jesus of Nazareth. The significance of the Middle Ages, and thus, antithetically, of the movement initiated by the Humanism of the Renaissance, lies in the fact that, for the first and perhaps the last, time in history, however imperfectly and however merely formally, that generalised creature 'Man' did live and order his life at every particular in at least a tangential relationship with that countenance, the countenance of God become Man. Throughout the Christendom of the Middle Ages, the distinctively human image was being formed and forged and impressed upon the minds of mankind in general.

The ages of Faith, which, whatever their very manifest failures and shortcomings, nevertheless exalted God, preached the doctrine of sin, repentance and salvation for the unrepeatable, microcosmic human soul; which checked the secular power with the authority of the Church, and projected the ideal human types of the monk and the knight: those ages have been superseded at the end of the humanistic, rationalistic spiral by the age of Despair, which is oblivious of God, makes men into objects and commodities, exalts the power of the State, and has no human type to offer for emulation

more meaningful than the type of the film-star and the storm-trooper. Under the totalitarian regimes of today, human personality is not merely of no account in itself, it is not merely unrecognised, but its manifestations are sought out for deliberate extermination. There can be no question whatever but that the essential meaning of totalitarianism, whatever its incidental characteristics, is anti-personalism. A writer in a recent number of *Politics* (New York), describing in detail his personal experience of the treatment of prisoners in a pre-war Nazi concentration camp, gives it as his considered opinion that the rationale of the otherwise senseless procedure in these camps, whose end was to make 'good' totalitarian citizens out of recalcitrant individual material, was the methodical disintegration of personality. Totalitarianism's obliviousness of God and of Man necessarily involves the contemptuous destruction of religion and art, the perversion of philosophy and science, and, as its only possible end, the precipitation of humanity into endless, meaningless war.

So much by way of necessary preface. But what it is important to grasp in the trend of the past three centuries towards man's extrusion, as it were, upon the plane of the exterior, is that man's *inwardness* has diminished proportionally to the extent to which he has come to regard himself and to be regarded as a product of the external processes of the objective world. Man's inwardness, personality, was, roughly speaking, safeguarded when the essential being of man was seen to belong to a superior order to that of the natural world-process. It was assailed when man ceased to relate himself to that which transcends our world and instead saw himself as a natural and temporal creature—which is to say, as an object in a world of objective being.

Man is a being living simultaneously in two coexistent and indivisible orders, Space and Time, or more concretely Nature and History. But, despite the timid clinging to the mundane of large numbers of the human herd, man in general is not content with his individual, finite existence lived on a mundane, meaningless level within the crushing limits imposed by these orders. He longs always to transcend himself, to move out of the pettiness of life on the everyday level into communion with a greater reality, which alone can give meaning and purpose to his individual life. This longing for transcension of the mundane level was satisfied religiously in the Middle Ages in the common worship of the Holy Trinity. The turning towards the transcendent spiritual realm, an individual act performed within the context of the inward collective (the Church), polarised the individual existence to the realm of the *super*-natural and the *super*-temporal, and human life was seen as a conflict of good and evil, whose issue was salvation or damnation, enacted within the soul of each individual man and woman. It meant that while man's feet were planted in the lateral realms of Nature and History, these realms were stabilised and kept in place through his vertical spiritual aspiration towards the eternal and transcendent.

What happened when this unifying vertical principle was gradually removed, when religious faith became the exception rather than the norm, was, in one aspect, that man increasingly surrended his existence to the realms of Nature and History. For some time human life proceeded in a more or less stable pattern, although it was a pattern which, pushed into exteriority, was becoming increasingly sterile and unsatisfying to the deeper impulses of human life. Eventually life on this level, shutting the individual into an isolated compartment of the ego with egress only into a stifling, unreal system of social relationships, began to be intolerable to large numbers of more or less sensitive people. But the longing for the infinite and the supra-personal, debarred, as it seemed, from taking a vertical direction, began to take a lateral course and to plunge the exceptionally dissatisfied and restless individual into one of the two disparate lateral realms, of *History* on the one hand and *Nature* on the other.

The tendency, observable from the beginning of the nineteenth century, for man to deify History and to desire to secure meaning for his own no longer intrinsically significant individual existence by plunging himself into the violent stream of collective action, has today become so much a matter of raw common experience as to require but the barest indication here. The tendency, in a rationalised form, and with a purposive bent, is already noticeable in the nineteenth-century Marx. It stands out nakedly, irrational and 'romantic,' without purpose and for its own sake, in the vapourings of the twentieth-century Spengler. That this tendency is only made possible through the elimination of the individual as a valid centre of existence is plain. And the individual was such no longer, because he had ceased to be related inwardly to God, and was seen as completely a child of Nature and of History. Perhaps we can learn less from such armchair philosophers as Spengler than from the less abstract exemplars of the trend which he preresents in a bookish, professorial sort of form. The mysticism of Historical Destiny lurks, for instance, behind all those 'leftist' novels which portray the progress of the neurotic, discontented, isolated individual from futility to purposiveness through his identification of his personal aims with the revolutionary working-class movement, and those other works of fiction which from the outset submerge the individual characters and their destinies within the general flux of action of which they are expressions. The art of the totalitarian state is of this order, a disintegration of art into 'action.' 'Nowadays reality runs ahead of art. It is full of majestic events, heroics, valorous deeds surpassing the richest creative imagination. Present-day life moves very swiftly. Events move very fast. People grow before your eyes. Only he is capable of great creative work who catches up with life and actively takes part therein,' pontificates the Soviet critic, Solodovnikov (according to the *New Statesman*, December 16th, 1944), surveying contemporary Russian literature and threateningly indicating that 'introspective' and 'critically negative' literature (Dostoevsky? Chekhov?) is 'unlikely' to have any place in post-war Russian letters.

The trend towards *dissolution into History* is perhaps the most revealing sign of the anguish and despair of humanity, in a world apparently deprived of religious meaning. No one can fail to be aware at least of its consequences. The trend towards *dissolution into Nature*,—though, through its less agitated character, it has received much less attention—is a hardly less significant impulsion of the human psyche towards the immolation of individual identity, and the obliteration of the human image. Like the contrary movement into History, the dissolution of man into Nature is anti-personal, anti-cultural and anti-spiritual. It is also, of course, a-historical and a-social, oblivious to history, just as the opposite trend is oblivious to the world of nature. When the trend is immobilised into mental concepts and takes on the static character of a cult, it is a cult of *solitude*, of *sensuality*, of biological *vitality* and of *merging*. In English literature, an early example of this tired, or anguished, trend towards the sinking of personal identity into the greater being of Nature would seem to be provided by Emily Brontë. Richard Jefferies' *The Story of My Heart* is a classic expression of it. But because the trend is so clearly a-cultural and anti-intellectual, its literary expression is necessarily restricted. Like the false mysticism of History, its further rea hes plunge its victims into ecstatic communions beyond the need for mental articulation. It is for this reason that there are few notable writers whose work expresses this trend: but it may be clearly discerned in the writings of D. H. Lawrence, of Margiad Evans, the brothers J. C. and Llewellyn Powys, and in some of the third and fourth-rate writers of our time. J. C. Powys, it so happens, deserves our thanks for putting some central features of the trend, in other writers less didactically expressed, into a static formula, a 'philosophy.' He tells us, for instance, that—

> . . . the most intense as well as the most lasting enjoyment possible to man is not to be attained through love or lust or power or possession or action, but through a very special sort of sensation, the sensation of embracing the whole Inanimate Mystery of which our present Dimension is composed.

And, more lyrically:

> . . . But oh! the escape from the appalling debt we owe to our fellow men that is offered by the inanimate or sub-animate! The more we learn to eat it, drink it, ravish it, be ravished by it, lose ourselves in it, the more fully we shall possess our souls in peace, the better will our solitude be protected and our subtlest egoism fulfilled.

This trend into Nature takes many diverse forms, varying in intensity with the force of the emotional impulsions (the urgency of the need to escape from the burden of individual identity) behind them. The whole gamut, emotional and intellectual, is run through progressively in the writings of Lawrence, and, less complexly, but even more intensely, in a somewhat different form, in the work of Margiad Evans. But it is a pervasive trend, and it has left its marks in the most unexpected quarters.

The clearest possible sign of the true character of each of these lateral movements, both into Nature and into History, however, is found in their submissive orientation towards death and physical dissolution.

In an interesting recent essay entitled 'Art and Social Responsibility' (*Now*, Volume II), Alex Comfort has associated 'personality' with the 'realisation of death.' But since the awareness of personal extinction is of all things the most intolerable to man, Comfort points out, to overcome his fear of death, which is inseparably associated with his existence as an individual, man must 'deny either that death is real or that his personality is really personal.' The absence of a general belief in immortality now necessitates for the mass of men the second alternative, and consequently the negation of individuality takes the form of the submergence of the individual into the all-wise, all-powerful and deathless collective. There is a good deal of truth in this diagnosis, but it is too static a conception, and requires to be connected with the 'Time-mind' as analysed, for instance, by Wyndham Lewis in certain sections of *Time and Western Man*. The connection between (i) the minimisation of the individual; (ii) the exaltation of the collective; (iii) the hysteria of historical destiny; (iv) war, and (v) death, is, I take it, sufficiently obvious. 'Fascism,' writes Comfort, with some truth, 'is a refuge from Death in death. And fascism epitomises society.'

Turning back to the trend towards dissolution into Nature, one finds it marked by an acquiescence in mortality no less unconditional. The transient sensual happiness on which some of the shallower devotees of the static cult of Nature place such emphasis has, to the Christianised mind, a ghoulish character: it is a 'happiness' snatched from the mouth of the grave. The work of the more sincere and impassioned writers caught in this trend, however, reveals its superiority by the deep, aching sadness which pervades it. With a curious compulsive inevitability, the thoughts of almost every writer whose work expresses this trend move from love for Nature to the longing for Death. Even when, as in Lawrence, the emphasis in their work is upon the *vitality* of Nature, they can hardly conceal from themselves that Nature is the bringer not only of life, but of corruption, and that to embrace Nature is also to embrace Death. In a rational-optimistic form this embracing of death is expressed by J. C. Powys, whom again I will let speak for the trend in general:

> . . . the nearer we get to the end the more 'native and endued' to that end does our identity become. The energy of our apprehension wanes, the sensibility of our affections dwindles, the up-leap of our spirit declines, and an insidious weariness takes possession of us—in a word we feel *tired*; not tired of just this or that, not tired of any particular occupation or any particular struggle, but tired of the whole business, tired of the effort to enjoy, tired of the effort to endure, tired of the effort *to be*. It is Nature herself who works this change, and as we yield ourselves up to it—and the grand trick is to fall relaxed before it, as men can fall to the ground without trying to save themselves—there is a certain pleasant irony to be enjoyed if we keep our heads. . . . For such is Nature's unfathomable indulgence to those of her offspring who follow her lead that there actually is a sweetness, a sweetness never known before and totally unexpected, in the steady, unremitting pull towards the formless elements out of which our exacting and exhausted form originates.

Nothing reveals more completely than this sad and ignoble acquiescence in the fact of physical death how profoundly estranged man has become from the depths of existence revealed in Christian

thought, to which the final indignity and meaninglessness of death is intolerable, and which reaches its most sublime expression in the affirmation of Christ's victory over death, of the resurrection of the body, and of eternal life.

From the side of History, wherever totalitarianism comes into power, in its frenzied war upon man's inwardness it tears down the few remaining pictures of Christ, and 'replaces' them by the photograph of Cæsar. From the side of Nature, it is again Christ who, standing between man and his daemonic will to self-destruction, must be obliterated: the necessity to disfigure the countenance of Christ was felt compulsively by both Nietzsche and Lawrence.

But in defacing the countenance of Christ, man is obliterating his own image: he is destroying himself.

In our time there is no more meaningful activity than the struggle towards the rediscovery and reaffirmation of the human image—which is also the rediscovery and reaffirmation of the integrity of the individual personality. But in this struggle, which intellectually and spiritually must be waged against the trend towards dissolution into either of the lateral realms of existence, and which, therefore, is, positively, a struggle against dissolution and death for integration and life, there is required no repudiation of Nature or of History. What is imperative is to deprive each realm of the false absoluteness that it claims, or which is claimed for it, and to place both realms side by side in subordination (to use a figure) to the true, vertical absolute, which is Spirit.

The human image will never be restored to the face of humanity until it is first recovered by *the individual.* It cannot be recovered by turning to humanity, for that would be to look to an image for its own source. Human experience in history will tell us, if we care to hear, that it is in our search for God that we find Man.

TWO SONNETS

JOHN ARLOTT

Clausentum: The Bones

In this half-hidden room without a door
We found a hoard of excavated bones
With careful labels, jumbled on the floor,
With broken tiles and oyster-shells and stones.
The yellow skull still wore its cap of soil
With grits for jewels, like an earthen crown.
For this man, rightful heir of land and toil,
Inherited the earth when he lay down
With six warm feet of river-clay for bed.
He made the strong-limbed root of oak his bride
And, in his coronation robe of lead,
He ruled three hundred lifetimes by her side.
But now the spiders hide inside his head,
The throne is empty and the king is dead.

Clausentum: The Old Walls

Across the ancient manor's wounded walls,
In scars from rub of time or fire's quick spear,
The building's stone-spelt story sharply falls
In ordered chapters, pictured text-book clear :—
Victorian stucco tricked in dull designs,
Elizabethan-married beam and brick,
And, under all, in measured mighty lines,
The mediæval stones, a man's stretch thick,
Reveal their templar arches to impart
Once more to these same trees that knew his face
The legend of their long-dead mason's art.
He, landless, nameless, left no other trace,
Bur here with daily stones and sand and lime
He braced a buttress to the stress of time.

THE REGRESS OF THE WEST

A Study of 'The Unquiet Grave'

MELVILLE CHANING-PEARCE

THE knell of the doctrine of the Progress of the West has now been tolled for a long time; the contrary doctrine of the Regress of the West seems hardly yet to have been seriously considered. Yet the one presupposes the other and if, as we are learning to believe, in our ends are our beginnings, the latter theme is one peculiarly pertinent for our modern predicament. There are few war-born books which pose these ambivalent themes so cogently as *The Unquiet Grave* by Palinurus. It is a book to ponder.

The title which Palinurus has chosen for his little book of journal jottings, pensées and quotations (mainly from the French) which have 'rung his bell' is, in the Hebrew sense of that term, a true name; it conveys the very nature of the thing signified. Here it is the token of not only the writer's, but also a very general and ominous life-attitude. How unquiet is the grave to which our lost generation has come! The last scions of the princely stock of Renaissance individualism live in the grave of that great age and find there little rest for their souls. Introspective heirs of Montaigne, such as Palinurus, are no longer wedding-guests at the triumph of Renaissance man, but mourners at his funeral. Palinurus broods over the embers, the grandeur that was Europe's greatness and the glory that was the culture of France. And finds there, in the words of the old ballad from which his title is taken, only 'clay-cold lips' and a breath which 'smells earthy-strong.' His book is an elegy upon an epoch. But it is an elegy gone sour, obsessed by the 'acrid stench of existence.' It is a life-loathing which consciously echoes that of Kierkegaard.

'I stick my finger into existence—it smells of nothing,' cried that pale prophet of our doom, precisely a century before this book was published.

The author's pen-name is no less apt to his threnody. Palinurus was the doomed helmsman of the fleet of Aeneas fleeing from a fallen Troy to an unknown Rome, from a dying to a renascent world credible only for an ardent piety and an all-enduring hope. He is lost in storm and sea, that constant symbol of the unconscious and at last, tossed ashore, murdered by savage men. Here, for Palinurus, is a true parable of our predicament today and of the doubtful doom of our whole Western civilisation. It is a parable unsparingly and convincingly applied. Since the Letters of T. E. Lawrence no book in English has so clearly presented the plight of modern man.

Whether this book will win to the sparse ranks of classic confessions is a question with which we are not here concerned, and only time and a criticism taken from a perspective impossible for the contemporary critic can tell. All that can be judiciously said now is that it shows signs of such an excellence—a subjectivity so absolute that the surrendered and sacrificed self escapes into an absolute validity, a particular self-portrait which attains to a universal significance as the portrait not of a man only but of an age, a microcosm mirroring the macrocosm of the modern conciousness. The chiselled lapidary epigrams with which the book abounds suggest the same rare translation from the temporal to the timeless. 'Ripeness is all'; such sentences fall from an autumnal culture like ripe fruit from a shaken tree. These are qualities which all the great confessions and pensées of the world possess. Such works are always autumnal in character. They flourish, as Dr. Bowra has said of the literary epic, 'not in the heyday of a nation or a cause but in its last days or in its aftermath.'

Some may find this very candour yet another pose and therefore incline to dismiss it as unreal. It may be so. The book is so acutely yet suavely self-conscious that even its self-analysis and sense of guilt, doom and dread may be themselves a pose. It does not seem to matter very much. If this also is pose it is the final pose—a death-mask—and all the more significant for that. The more significant since such a pose is in itself a symptom of the soul-malady which he seeks to portray. Palinurus succeeds in masking himself with the very candour with which he denudes himself; that nudity is a 'dazzling darkness' in which his ego escapes from view. It is a stratagem symptomatic of that flight from the freedom and burden of personality of which he tells. 'Sometimes,' he writes, 'I get a feeling of claustrophobia, of being smothered by my own personality.' He seeks escape from that incubus through its analysis, as only a mind armed by modern psychology could do, and it is this profound psychological awareness which distinguishes these confessions from their predecessors and marks their modernity.

It is a phobia very typical of our time. It was thus that T. E. Lawrence fled from alibi to alibi in 'disgust for (his) war personality.'

So Henry James wrote of 'the dreary duty of being a personality.' And it was the same sense of claustrophobia that prompted Pirandello's lament that 'we are all beings caught in a trap, severed from the flux of life. . .' For such sick moderns self-consciousness and the sense of individuality are no longer a vainglorious daydream but a nightmare, and the ego a malignant growth. 'When did the ego begin to stink?' asks Palinurus. That it does so today is all too evident. It would seem that the turn of the century marks approximately the turn of the tide of exuberant Nineteenth Century egotism to its swift denigration, and that the first world-war and Freud gave to individualism and the parallel cult of the 'great man' their over-due *coup-de-grace.* As Palinurus acutely observes, 'for modern man Pascal's "*moi*" is Freud's "Id."' It is no less '*haissable*' for the Freudian than for Pascal, but today the roots of its hatefulness have been exposed.

Palinurus has asked the crucial question: if we knew precisely when this decomposition of the ego began we might also know why. But, whatever the cause, the effect is manifest. The decay of individualism marks the end of Renaissance man, and today, in every sphere of human activity, we are increasingly conscious of that corruption. Our air is fetid with the stench, and there are few who can find a way of escape from that charnel-house. For all but the wilfully obtuse the psychological parallels to Belsen are inescapable. 'We are all serving a life-sentence in the dungeon of the self.' 'The ego is like a cell which over-asserts itself and causes cancer.' Such sayings give voice to a common consciousness and dread. Self-fulfilment for all but fools today, spells not triumph but terror; the vaunted freedom of the individual has become a fearful thing. 'For to be free is to be lonely.'

Thus, as Palinurus perceives, this corruption of the ego begets the fear of freedom which Dr. Fromm has lately analysed. And the fear of freedom still further saps the self; cause and effect interact in a psychological *danse macabre.* 'To feel completely alone and isolated,' says Dr. Fromm, 'leads to mental disintegration.' It is of precisely such a disintegration or decomposition of the self, the corruption of the soul, that such sophisticated moderns as Palinurus are afraid; that fear is but the reverse of a general fear of freedom. Thus the very assertion of the self leads to its dissolution. Here is that 'law of Abraxas,' of psychological contradiction and frustration, paralysing action, at work within the psyche itself. It is the very burden of Palinurus' lament; the name which he has adopted is, he informs us, 'the archetype of frustration, of a certain will to failure.' He has probed to the core of the modern malady of soul.

This book thus presents a rare and excellent specimen, segregated in the experience of a single self, of this most modern and fatal of our phobias. It is that from which France fell, rotten-ripe and impotent, into the maw of the barbarian, and it seems of especial significance that Palinurus is saturated in French culture. He has the infatuation for all things French which Mr. Arthur Koestler has called the 'French 'flu.' The fact does not diminish the importance

or relevance of his testimony, for there will be few to dispute that French culture is the acme of European civilisation. If this is the psychological state towards which that culture tends, it is also that towards which the whole civilisation of the West is en route. What is true for France and Francophiles today, will be true, unless that fever-curve can be arrested, for all our Western world tomorrow; we have been warned. Here, it seems, is the first incidence of a world-neurosis. 'We are,' declares Palinurus, 'within sight of achieving a world-neurosis, a world in which . . . humanity will choke in its own bile.' It is a diagnosis not easy to deny.

So far he does little more than underline, with exceptional clarity and awareness, a diagnosis of our state which has lately been delivered *ad nauseam*. He tells the end of an age. For the majority of the over-vocal professional wailers at that wake, and often, it would seem for Palinurus himself, that is also the end of all things. Beyond the decay of individualism for them there is nothing at all. But not always; there are curious clues in this book which suggest a suspicion in the mind of Palinurus that, after all, this is not necessarily the end. It is these clues which differentiate it from similar jeremiads.

He shows, in spite of his avowed hedonism, a strange and wistful insight into the laws of a life of the spirit and personality resurgent from the dying life of the flesh and individual soul, beholding them as though from afar off. He knows the serenity of solitude, of the flight, as Plotinus put it, of 'the alone to the Alone,' and that the opposite flight from personality and solitude is due primarily to dread of such an alonenens engendering Gadarene herd-stampedes into the 'whelming tide' of totalitarianism. Yet, while he also dreads it, Palinurus is very sure of the supreme value of solitude as the matrix of art and the life of spirit. 'Even in the most socialised community,' he observes, 'there must always be a few who best serve it by being kept solitary and isolated,' in a 'golden and rewarding silence'; 'art is made by the alone for the alone.'

As one who seeks to be an artist he knows well the supreme value of the contemplative state, and quotes Walter Sickert with approval—'The one thing in all my experience I cling to is my coolness and leisurely exhilarated contemplation.' But he also counts the cost of such creative contemplation. He knows that while 'nothing can be accomplished without fanaticism . . without serenity nothing can be enjoyed.' Yet he can see beyond that psychological dilemma. He is obscurely conscious of a plane of being in which such contraries and dualities are done away in a 'two-faced Truth . . . the Holy Both.' It is a fleeting perception which he does not, or cannot, pursue. He knows that natural life, in its first immediacy or spontaneity, is in or is analogous to a 'state of grace,' but appears blind to the possibility that such a naïve 'state of grace' may be recoverable in a second immediacy. He has guessed the fact with which every spiritual proficient is familiar that life 'after the spirit' involves a dislocation of the life 'after the flesh' and the rhythm of the psyche which, from the angle of the latter way of life, may look like neurosis.

'Those who are conscious of another world, the world of the spirit,' he writes, 'acquire an outlook which distorts the values of ordinary life; they are consumed by the weed of non-attachment.' Palinurus sees that apparent distortion from the angle of the hither world. It does not seem to occur to him that, in the transvaluation of the nether world of spirit, that which seems weed here may seem asphodel in that Elysium.

Palinurus and his like (their name is legion) are, in fact and in spite of their repudiation of what they conceive it to be, not far from the Christian Kingdom of God. He perceives with a Christian insight that religion is the sequel to art and the sequel to love (that is to say erotic love), that 'human life is understandable only as a state of transition,' that 'the spiritual life of man is the flowering of his bodily existence,' that 'one cannot serve both beauty and power,' and he quotes Chamfort's dictum that 'il faut recommencer la société humaine' with assent. 'Spiritualise the earthbound,' he exhorts himself and declares that 'happiness lies in the fulfilment of the spirit beyond the body.'

These are insights into the reality of life 'after the spirit' which, though obscure to many a conventional Christian, are essentially Christian in character and derivation. He seems to suppose that they are orthodox pagan and anti-Christian sentiments, and to be curiously unaware of the fact that such propositions are in the fullest accord with a Biblical Christianity. When he confronts Christianity itself his division of mind is most evident. 'Original Sin, what rubbish!' he interjects early in his journal, but towards the end of it he finds that 'true civilisations' are distinguished by 'that tap-root to the Unconscious, the sense of Original Sin.' He declares that 'there can be no going back to Christianity' and finds the Jesus he perceives all-too-human and yet nevertheless unique among men. 'It is impossible,' he writes after a debunking passage in the manner of the Rationalist Press, 'not to believe in his greatness, his majesty, his fatalistic intuition and in that mixture of practical wisdom with sublime vision which alone can save our world . . . Jesus Christ seems different from every other man.' Such contradictions are eloquent of a very significant hesitation of judgment.

Before the very portals of a way of the spirit upon which he glimpses salvation, he shudders and shies. And knows that he is shying. In one of the most real and revealing of his confessions he writes—'Approaching forty, sense of total failure . . . dust and ashes. . . Never have I made that extra effort to live according to reality.' Therefore he remains and knows that he remains 'moth-eaten with self-pity.' Yet, with a profound flash of insight, he knows that this very realism in self-confrontation is itself an 'extra effort' which lifts him for a moment across the threshold. 'These lines' he notes with wonder, 'seem to be quite different.' But the 'nausea of the threshold' inhibits that 'extra effort' and that experience of enhanced reality from becoming more than momentary. That nausea is, as it were, a Great Barrier Reef which blocks the access of exploratory spirits such as that of Palinurus to those polar regions

of the life of the spirit, austere and serene, of which they know by surmise and report for the haven where they would be. It is an inhibition upon the comprehension and resolution of which the fate of our world depends.

Palinurus knows much about the nature of this nausea. It is, he realises, one of the sinister symptoms of the endemic modern disease of Dread or, as he styles it after Kierkegaard, 'Angst.' 'The secret of happiness,' he writes, 'lies in the avoidance of Angst (anxiety, spleen, noia, guilt, fear, remorse, cafard).' He finds it latent in the self like a maggot in an apple; 'Angst is inherent in the uncoiling of the ego, the *ver solitaire*.' It is the poison-fruit of fear; 'que cette peur prenne conscience d'elle-meme et elle devient l'angoisse (*angst*), climat perpetuel de l'homme lucide,' he quotes from Heidegger.

Here again, as he knows, he has been anticipated by those two pioneers of the life of the spirit with whom he and his like find today so strong an affinity, Pascal and Kierkegaard. Pascal posed the psychological conflict whence Angst proceeds three centuries ago, with his famous delineation of man as 'juge de toutes choses, imbecile ver de terre, depositaire du vrai, cloaque d'incertitude et d'erreur, gloire et rebut de l'univers.' A century ago Kierkegaard found in Dread or Angst 'a desire for what one dreads . . . an alien power' which 'captivates with a sweet apprehension,' a 'dizziness, in which freedom succumbs,' a 'dread of the good' which is also a dread of nothing, for 'dread and nothing regularly correspond with each other.' And Palinurus recognises with Kierkegaard that the state of Dread is precursive to that of Spirit; 'the less spirit the less dread.'

There is the festering core of our corruption and paralysis whence proceed, not only this inhibiting 'nausea of the threshold,' but also all the virulent poisons of our age. The reaction from that Dread, for the semi-conscious majority, is towards totalitarianism. 'All State propaganda exalts comradeship,' says Palinurus, 'for it is this gregarious herd-sense and herd-smell which keeps people from thinking and so reconciles them to the destruction of their private lives.' Such a reaction is thus one form of the familiar psychosis of reversion to a former and inferior state—the pre-individualistic condition of what M. Levy Bruhl has called 'participation mystique,' the merging of the individual consciousness in that of the tribe or of nature, the craving for the womb whence it derived, trailing a cloudy but constant memory of primal nescient bliss.

Such womb-craving and reversion has become increasingly prevalent since 1914. It assumes many forms such as the cult of Peter Pan and prevalence of Peter Panism or arrested adolescence, the reversal of art to Byzantine or negroid and theology to Tridentine or Confessional prototypes, the inter-war passion for archæology. The form in which it affects '*l'homme lucide*' such as Palinurus is different only in kind from its more crude manifestations. 'The mind has its own womb,' he writes, 'the womb of Homer and Herodotus' and the rest of the European historic past. 'We fly to

Mediterranean womb-pockets and dream islands, into dead controversies and ancient hermetic bric-a-brac, like a child who sits hugging his toys and who screams with rage when told to put on its boots.' 'If we apply depth-psychology to our own lives we see how enslaved we remain to the womb and the mother. Womb of Mother Church, of Europe, mother of continents, of horseshoe harbours and valleys, of the lap of earth, of the bed, the armchair and the bath' and a variety of other symbols of womb-life the significance of which is only apparent for '*l'homme lucide*' educated by modern psychology, who can add to that culture the candour which Palinurus displays.

It is characteristic, moreover, of Dread that it desires what is dreaded. So the modern mind craves for an astringent, a hurtful realism as the tongue returns to the aching tooth. 'Everything is a dangerous drug,' declares Palinurus, 'except reality, which is unendurable.' It seems questionable, however, whether such a realism is not itself also often yet another drug. Just because it is unendurable he and his congeners return to such a realism like the dog to its vomit with a curious and symptomatic refusal to concede that reality can ever be anything but revolting. Such a Dread-begotten sado-masochism seems the only adequate explanation of contemporary literary phenomena such as the vogue of horror catered for in the works of Sachaverell Sitwell, Aldous Huxley or Arthur Koestler, or of the popularity of such tortured truth as that of Pascal, Baudelaire or Kierkegaard. In a more crude form this manifestation of Dread is to be found in the appeal of the Grand Guignol type of melodrama or the queues which patronise photographic exhibitions of the 'horror camps.' All alike are symptoms of this general disease of Dread from which the soul of Western Man is sick unto death.

But *The Unquiet Grave* is not only a thesaurus of such symptoms of this disease of Dread; it is also an indication of a restlessness within this morgue of Renaissance Man which suggests the possibility of a resurrection. 'Never have I made that extra effort to live according to reality'—that key-confession suggests a knowledge of doors from that mausoleum which, given that 'extra effort,' it might perchance fit. Like many another modern, Palinurus seems to stand giddily upon the verge of a life 'after the spirit' of which he knows in part by head but not by heart prevented by nausea of the threshold from taking the 'leap in the dark' from the hither to the nether world of being. He and his like prefer to remain dwellers on the threshold and to 'daydream in a lavatory . . while a new world is being born.' Again his recognition of the reality of that state suggests that he is not likely to remain in it for long.

It is this very unprecedented consciousness of the nature of the disease of our civilisation which suggests a hope of its cure. As Stanley Casson wrote in *Progress and Catastrophe*, 'consciousness of the position alone may contribute to stopping the downward trend of modern civilisation.' In this book that 'consciousness of the position' is focussed to a burning point; there is its rare value

and significance. Yet that consciousness remains curiously arrested at the point where negation may (and, in the case of masters such as Kierkegaard and Pascal whom Palinurus follows thus far but no farther, can) by virtue of that 'extra effort', become transmuted into affirmation.

Palinurus is very sure as to the end of our epoch, and yet seems, moreover, to suspect that in that end there may also be a beginning. But it is a clue which he fails to follow. He perceives that 'the civilisation of one epoch becomes the manure of the next,' but it does not seem to occur to him that individualism may be the manure of personalism, and a hedonistic life 'after the flesh' of a life 'after the Spirit,' or that this very consciousness of the position is itself a transcension of its limitations. Or, indeed, that the spirit of man, armed with such an awareness and 'extra effort,' may not be able not only to accept the cosmic process of the rise, decline and fall of civilisations but even to preside over and assist in the healthful decomposition of a dying age upon the compost-heaps of history. Within such a pessimism as that of Palinurus there seem to lurk seeds of a wider faith and hope for mankind of which he is himself only half-aware.

The book is a notable illustration of the law that we learn from life and from masters only what we are ready to receive. Palinurus seems to find in Pascal and Kierkegaard all the answers to his enigmas save the last. He has learned from them the nature of Dread. But he has not learned that celestial chemistry by which that dross may be turned into gold. It is a science which cannot be taught in the language of our logic, but it has, perhaps, never been better indicated than by Kierkegaard. 'He who with respect to guilt is educated by dread . . . will repose in atonement'; 'so soon as the spirit is posited, dread is annulled.' It would seem that this dire education is not yet concluded.

Meanwhile Palinurus and his kind halt upon the threshold drugged with dread; his plight is the plight of our world. It is a plight, not of the soul, but of the spirit of man. Where is its healing? To a Christianity such as he conceives there can be no return. But is he rejecting the 'Eternal Gospel' or a moribund formulation of it? To his declaration that 'there can be no going back to Christianity' that of Benedetto Croce may be countered—'Christianity, even though it may now seem otherwise, can never be surpassed or out of date.' But only a Christianity itself reborn and transfigured could, or should, persuade such as Palinurus to recross that threshold and exchange an 'unquiet grave' for a peace which, upon any other terms, would be no peace for spirits 'touched to fine issues' and vowed, like Job, not to remove their integrity.

That, for the Christian critic, is the burden of this book. It is a grievous one to which our current Christianity seems, for the most part, to have but a 'dusty answer' to give. It seems indeed that our professional clerisy may have more to learn from than to teach to such as Palinurus. His very emphasis upon the modern trend towards reversal to a womb condition, though one which he fails to

follow through, suggests perhaps the real, though dolorous, way by which the Christian Church, like the moribund culture of Europe, may find its own renascence and a Word more relevant to this modern mood.

For Palinurus, our trend towards reversal implies only psychosis. But its generality, profundity and persistence suggest an alternative interpretation of that psychological phenomenon. What if this so-potent instinctual drive back to the womb-state and the origins of our culture were, *au fond*, not perversion but a fundamentally sane reversion ? History abounds in similar instances of the return of faiths and cultures to the ' desert wells ' whence they derived, and it is, perhaps, not without significance that the desert has lately become a favourite symbol in the most sensitive literature of our day. But, just, as our Christianity is loth to look back beyond its Roman origins, so Palinurus and our learned clerks conceive of no reversal beyond the springs of Græco-Roman culture in ' Homer and Herodotus.' Yet both the culture and the Christianity of Western Europe derive from a womb-life, from origins to which those of Greece and Rome are of yester-year.

Palinurus is sure—and who will dispute the assurance ?—that the doctrine of the progress of the West is an exploded myth. But what if the modern mass-instinct of reversal is a sign, not of insanity, but of a profound sanity, if, not in the progress, but in the regress of the West the renewal of both its culture and its Christianity is not rather to be sought in primordial ' wells of wisdom ' long forsaken by the complacent and inbred culture of post-Renaissance Europe ? It is the residual (though, for him, maybe, fantastic) speculation which this palinode of Palinurus suggests.

SOME ARABIC-ANDALUSIAN CASIDAS

Translated by

HAROLD MORLAND

[' In eleventh century Andalusia, Arabic poets already perfected the style of the short lyric called the *casida*. . . The spirit of the desert, transplanted in the luxuriant Andalusian landscape, introduced a tightly wrought imagery into Spanish lyricism. . . One facet . . . is its astonishing obsession with erotic love, reinforced by the platonic notion of chastity. . . The tendency throughout was to petrify the image. . . (The Arabic poet) delighted in fixing dreams and quickly perishing life in the form of brilliant arabesques . . .'—Edwin Honig.]

WHITE SKIN

I proclaim a peerless girl
And see her as a pearl
Whose candour maiden-shame
To red cornelian can inflame.

Ah so pure the child's complexion
That when there I look,
As in a limpid brook
I see my own reflection.

BEN ABD RABBIHI OF CORDOBA (10th Century)

MOURNING IN ANDALUSIA

In Andalusia clothes are white
That folk in mourning wear;
The custom's right . . . I bear its truth
In every greying hair
That grieves for my lost youth.

ABU-L-HASAN AL-HUSRI THE BLIND (11th Century)

THE WHITE HORSE

White as the morning-star
At sunrise, proud and cold,
His saddle gleaming gold,
He steps before me into battle . . .
Then how envious are
The captains. One cries loud:
Who has flung the Pleiades
For bridle on the dawn?
And with the half-moon for a saddle
Tames the lightning down?

ABU SALT UMAYYA OF DENIA (12th Century)

INSOMNIA

The bird of sleep would nest
Deep in my eyes, and rest
But sees the lashes there
And flies, dreading a snare.

ABU AMIR AL-HAMMARA (12th Century)

RAIN OVER THE RIVER

The wind's hand on the river
Rippling a thousand-fold
Devises with a subtle grace
A smithry of bright gold.
And when the forging's over
Of the mesh of a cuirass,
The rain with its tiny rivets
Links them into place.

ABU-L-QASIM AL-MANISI OF SEVILLE (12th Century)

THE LANCE

Swarthy she was, but the fight that day
Covered her head with a dust of grey,
For youth to age must still give way.

When against the coming foe
In my hand she plays her part,
She seems the rope with which I draw
Blood from the well of his heart.

ABU ZAKA-RIYYA, KING OF TUNIS (13th Century)

THE GALLEY

The galley moved like a swimmer
Too skilled to use his feet,
Swift as the swooping sea-bird
At a falcon's angry threat.

It seemed like an eye, sky-gazing,
Whose lids are banked by the lashes
Of the slender, quivering oars.

ABU-L-HACHCHACH AL-MUN-SAFI (13th Century)

FAUST AND GRETCHEN

R. D. MILLER

AN account once appeared in a Hamburg paper of a rather significant occurrence at a performance of *Faust*. The audience, who were of the naïve variety (it was a performance given specially for a certain group of workers), took Gretchen's troubles so much to heart that they cried out with one voice 'Heiraten sal he sie!', clambered onto the stage, and refused to allow the play to continue until it had been so altered as to include a scene showing the marriage of Faust and Gretchen at the altar. Now apart from the amusing side of the story, it is significant as an illustration—remarkable as this may seem—of the attitude that critics generally take up towards the Gretchen tragedy; for they insist on regarding Goethe's play as a picture of brute egotism triumphing over feminine innocence. The critics seem to be in agreement that when Faust protests the sincerity of his love he is merely adding hypocrisy to his other sins, that the fact of Goethe's making Gretchen drain her cup of suffering to the dregs is in itself a condemnation of Faust, and in short that the tragedy must at all cost be identified—if only by

virtue of its subject, and in contradiction with all the evidence of Goethe's actual text—with the popular conception of the way in which a seduction *ought* to take place, namely through male selfishness and female weakness. Kierkegaard describes Goethe—and from the context (in Chapter V of *Im Zwange des freien Gewissens*) it is clear that he is thinking of Faust and his treatment of Gretchen—as the type of man who, while he acts only for his own advantage, contrives to conceal his selfish nature behind a screen of lofty utterances. Benedetto Croce in his *Goethe* finds Faust 'rather a vulgar being, vulgar in the manner he approaches Gretchen the first time when she comes out of the church, vulgar in the artifices he uses, in the seduction accomplished by means of gifts of jewels and the go-betweens and procuresses, vulgar in his furious passion for this sweet creature. . .' Again, in the book *Goethe and Faust* the authors, F. Melian Stawell and G. Lowes Dickinson, use the bare facts of the plot as data on which to exercise their moralising faculty, rather as though they were sitting in judgment on a man's life instead of trying to catch the meaning of a play; and after a careful sifting of the evidence they arrive at the conclusion that after the death of Valentin 'Faust sinks to his lowest depth. He leaves Gretchen all alone (though he is not aware of her condition) and lets himself be carried where her fate can be hidden from him.' But it is T. G. Masaryk in *Modern Man and Religion* who makes the most uncompromising attack on Faust. 'Faust is the gospel of egotism. . . . Love is reduced to sexual, sensual love . . . . Marguerite is for him nothing but one of his experiments subjected to his emotions and sensuality, while at the same time he keeps his reason cold and clear.' And like Kierkegaard, he too refuses to be impressed by Faust's more serious utterances:—'The whole relation of the lovers to one another is comprised in a few philosophical phrases, and ends with brutal Don Juanerie.'

Now this melodramatic reading of the Gretchen tragedy could hardly have prevailed as it has, but for the play's superficial association with the Don Juan tradition and the failure of critics to do one simple but essential thing—to read Goethe's text. Let us therefore examine what does actually occur—not in this or in that story, but in the Gretchen episode of Goethe's *Faust*—and we may possibly arrive at a truer reading.

To say that the Gretchen tragedy is the tragedy of a good girl tempted into evil ways is to over-simplify and hence to falsify the truth. Certainly she is virtuous at the outset—

'Sie ist so sitt-und tugendreich'

—and certainly she is tempted into ways which bring great suffering upon her. But this is not the whole story; it is a far too moral story to be the whole story. Though her original state is good in so far as she is free from sin, it is not an ideal one; she is restricted, and she has experienced none of that intensity of feeling which Faust later describes as 'everything'. The fact that she is shown coming from church emphasises this aspect of her and brings out her

association with conventional morality. Accosted in the public thoroughfare (where she is exposed for a moment to the flow of life from which she is customarily sheltered) by the enemy of conventional morality and the advocate of feeling, she instinctively tries to resist his influence by snubbing him. But it is in vain: she is drawn into the whirlpool of feeling. This is not the moral story of a good girl gone wrong, but the philosophic story of a girl who experiences a heightening of the will and thereby becomes more aware than ever before of both the good and the evil of life. When Mephisto admits that he has no power over her—

'Über die hab ich keine Gewalt!'

—this signifies, not that she is protected from him by the sort of magic we read about in fairy stories, but that she is safeguarded from evil by the secluded sort of life she lives. The device of employing trinket-boxes to win her may seem crude (or 'vulgar,' as Croce says), but apart from their utilitarian role in the plot they have a symbolical value in suggesting the change that is taking place in Gretchen. If we read objectively we feel that the tragedy is due, not to the evil will of any single person (in this case Faust), but to a process of mutual attraction in circumstances that inevitably make such a process end in disaster. Her physical desire is unmistakeable:

'Mein Busen drängt
Sich nach ihm hin.'

Both she and Faust instinctively regard the coming doom as inevitable:

'An seinen Küssen
Vergehen sollt!'

'Mag ihr Geschick auf mich zusammenstürzen
Und sie mit mir zugrunde gehn!'

But in their love for each other they feel there is nothing but good:

'Mir wirds so wohl in deinem Arm,
So frei, so hingegeben warm.'

There is none of that psychological conflict which we sometimes notice at work in the characters of other tragedies, between tendencies felt by the characters themselves to be good or bad. There is on the other hand a conflict between an impulse felt by the person concerned as good, and the evil resulting from it; and there is also a conflict between the protagonist's sense of the goodness of his impulse and the condemnation of society, which sees only the resulting evil. The spiteful vindictiveness of Lieschen and the mob condemnation of Gretchen's neighbours is made to appear as lurid as possible. In the scene at the well we see the misplaced physical repulsion of Lieschen—

'Es stinkt!
Sie füttert zwei jetzt, wenn sie isst und trinkt'

—the condemnation of the Church—

'Im Sünderhemdchen Kirchbuss tun!

and the disgrace associated with long-established folk-custom.

> 'Das Kränzel reissen die Buben ihr,
> Und Häckerling streuen wir vor die Tür!'

Now the important point is that we are not meant to sympathise with all this, and—what is more important—we cannot naturally sympathise with it if we read receptively what is before us. *Faust* is a protest against the conventions, and Gretchen's plight is brought about as much by the dread of convention (causing her to murder her baby) as by her disregarding it. Furthermore, the reprobation of the unintelligent mob is itself represented as an evil, namely that of failing to understand that the sin committed by Gretchen is merely a particular example of the general sin that is inherent in life. In contrast to the society in which she is placed, Gretchen, conscious as she is that her sin proceeded from nothing but good—

> 'Gott! war so gut! ach, war so lieb!'

—undergoes a spiritual transformation and attains a new conception of the nature of good and evil. We see the beginning of this transformation in the scene with Lieschen.

> 'Wie konnt ich sonst so tapfer schmälen,'
>
> 'Und bin nun and selbst der Sünde bloss,'
>
> 'Doch—alles, was dazu mich trieb,
> Gott! war so gut! ach, war so lieb!'

This line of thought—'I who once condemned others for sinning have now sinned myself, and yet it was not evil that prompted me'—leaves her face to face with a surmise and a question: the surmise that other sinners too might not have been prompted altogether by evil, and the question whether such sinners can be branded as sinners in any special sense, whether they are more guilty than the rest of humanity, whether in fact they are not merely those who have been 'found out'. In the scene 'Zwinger' she turns from the unseeing multitude to a higher being, who alone can understand the sinner.

> 'Weisst nur du, nur du allein.'

In the Cathedral the tension, mounting with every angry chant by the choir, and with every crushing condemnation by the Evil Spirit, culminates in the Spirit's blatant expression of blind moralising:

> 'Ihr Antlitz wenden
> Verklärte von dir ab,
> Die Hände dir zu reichen,
> Schauerts den Reinen.'

It is not for nothing that the Spirit is designated 'Evil'. But his performance has already been matched in the Valentin scene by the mass condemnation of the 'people', speaking in a body—

> VOLK: 'Da liegt schon einer tot!'
>
> VOLK: 'Deiner Mutter Sohn!'

—and by the height of uncharitableness on the part of Valentin himself.

> 'Und wenn dir dann auch Gott verzeiht,
> Auf Erden sei vermaledeit!'

The people, Valentin, Lieschen, the Evil Spirit—what is the difference between them? They are all personifications of the same evil tendency, the evil of blind moralising. So far from serving as a chorus expressing Goethe's own comment on the play (and many critics seem to accept them as such and to repeat their remarks as their own), they are themselves a part, and an essentially evil part, of the tragedy.

Finally, in the prison scene Gretchen is depicted as the sinner and the sufferer who renounces life—she does not want Faust to 'rescue' her. The voice exclaiming from above:

> 'Ist gerettet!'

is symbolical merely; for it is not by a *deus ex machina* that she is saved, but by her own recognition of the inescapable element of evil in life, and by her own act of renunciation.

The picture that is usually drawn of Faust by the critics is equally false. There is nothing in the text to show that Faust's thoughts of Gretchen are exclusively or predominantly sensual; when, for instance, he stops her in the street he is captivated most by the modesty of her glance.

> 'Wie sie die Augen niederschlägt
> Hat tief sich in mein Herz geprägt.'

Left alone in her bed-room, instead of gloating over what a Don Juan would have regarded as the scene of his coming triumph, he dissolves in a dream of the purest, the most delicate love, is overcome by a sense of the innocence of her life.

> 'Natur! Hier bildetest in leichten Träumen
> Den eingebornen Engel aus!'

It is Mephistopheles, not Faust, who plays the part of the accomplished rake, or rather who could quite easily play this part, if he were not so busy persuading others to play it. True, when Mephistopheles exclaims

> 'Ihr sprecht schon fast wie ein Franzos.'

he is justified in so far as Faust has just boasted of the ease with which he could seduce Gretchen; but this boast was really more of a taunt to spur Mephistopheles on. It is Mephistopheles who points out that pleasure delayed is pleasure increased.

> 'Was hilft's, nur grade zu geniessen?'

It is Mephistopheles, not Faust, who sings Gretchen a moral song, the better to deceive her. Faust's love-impulse is too direct, too completely stripped of pretence, too all-embracing in its hold on his entire being, and too sincere, for him to play the part of a Don Juan.

His soul is too much involved for him to enjoy a woman as he would a choice wine.

> 'Und Brust an Brust und Seel an Seele drängen?'

Quite apart from the immediate need for gratification, there is a quality in his love which raises it above such gratification and enables him to feel it as something immortal. In 'Wald und Höhle', where he is parted from Gretchen, he describes her as an almost sacred being and the love she inspires as everlasting.

> 'Ich bin ihr nah, und wär ich noch so fern,
> Ich kann sie nie vergessen, nie verlieren;
> Ja, ich beneide schon den Leib des Herrn,
> Wenn ihre Lippen ihn indes berühren!'

These words, spoken with full conviction and with overwhelming poetic power, are scarcely the words of a hypocrite. In all true love, he seems to tell us, there is an image of the beloved that is never lost. He sees this image when he returns to Greece in the Second Part, and the conception of the ultimate reunion of Faust and Gretchen, implicit in the nature of their love, is realised in the final scene in heaven.

As for the coldness, the indifference that Faust is charged with showing towards Gretchen when disaster has come upon her, it simply does not exist, unless in the minds of those who charge him with it. Nothing could be more at variance with the unmistakeable anguish of soul he experiences, both before and after the event.

> 'Und ich, der Gottverhasste
> .....
> Sie, ihren Frieden musst ich untergraben!'

And in the scene 'Trüber Tag'.

> 'Mir wühlt es Mark und Leben durch, das Elend dieser Einzigen—du grinsest gelassen über das Schicksal von Tausenden hin!'

This is a not altogether unfair statement of the difference between Faust and Mephistopheles (whom the critics, however, try to identify, in order to blacken Faust); for whereas Mephistopheles has come to accept the evil of life philosophically (though not quite heartlessly, as Faust in his bitterness asserts), Faust is almost driven to madness by the thought of it. As Mephistopheles says:—

> 'Nun sind wir schon wieder an der Grenze unsres Witzes, da wo euch Menschen der Sinn überschnappt.'

And this is the Faust whom T. G. Masaryk describes as 'keeping his reason cold and clear'. Critics of the moralising type usually contrive to forget this scene, or wriggle out of the difficulty by dilating on 'Faust's abandonment of Gretchen'. In reality there is no abandonment. For after disaster has overtaken Gretchen, Goethe is for a time concerned only with her sufferings and the nightmare of the Walpurgisnacht to which, as Professor Barker Fairley explains in his book *Goethe as Revealed in His Poetry*, her sufferings give rise. For a time the relations between the lovers

is an aspect of the plot that has no interest for Goethe. If he had wanted to make 'the abandonment of Gretchen' the theme of his tragedy, he would probably have shown Faust hesitating between two possible courses, one good and one evil. It is not that he wishes to represent Faust as indifferent (on the contrary he actually puts an excuse into his mouth: 'Und mich wiegst du indes in abgeschmackten Zerstreuungen'), but that it is an essential part of his plan to show Gretchen brought to the extremity of suffering. At the end Gretchen herself does not wish to be rescued in the earthly sense, though Faust assures her in passionate language of his love and fidelity.

> 'Ich herze dich mit tausenfacher Glut.'
> 'Ich bleibe bei dir.'

But we have still not put our finger on the real cause of the failure of critics to appreciate the true quality of Faust's love. Croce makes the illuminating remark that the 'vulgar' Gretchen episode has little in common with the sublime Faust of the earlier scenes. This reveals the fundamental difficulty. For there is in fact an organic connection between the earlier and the later scenes, between the disillusioned professor in his study and the youthful wooer of Gretchen. We have said that the Gretchen tragedy is partly a protest against the restrictions of convention; but what is Faust's despairing question,

> 'Wo fass ich dich, unendliche Natur?'

but a protest against the restriction of life itself? And if Faust is doomed to fail in his search for the fount of life, in turning to Gretchen he is at least doing something more than seeking compensation for his failure; he is turning to one in whom he sees very real evidence of the divine fount.

> 'Fasst und erhält er nicht
> Dich, mich, sich selbst?'

The force that he could merely imagine, merely obtain a vision of, in his lonely study, he is able to see and to come into actual contact with—not at the fountain-head, but in one of its emanations—in his love-experience with Gretchen. This is the great truth so often missed or ignored: that he loves her because of the divine force working through her. Do we not feel the presence of this force behind the colossal utterance in which he declares his love?

> 'O schaudre nicht! Lass diesen Blick,
> Lass diesen Händedruck dir sagen,
> Was unaussprechlich ist.'

In some subtle way we are made to feel the influence of the divine source in all the scenes. This is the element of good in the play. It is a peculiar view that has nothing to do with conventional ideas of morality. For the element of good in *Faust* lies deeper than conventional morality, not less deep, in fact, than the fountain of life for which Faust sought in vain in his macrocosmic vision.

And just as the element of good in *Faust* is something impersonal, something deeper than the individual, so the element of evil is too

general to be peculiar to one person. The Gretchen tragedy is simply a particular illustration of that evil aspect of life which is also one of the central themes of the drama as a whole. We are meant, in reading *Faust*, to think, not in terms of individual personal causation, but in terms of that general causation which works from the general to the particular. Faust, as an individual, is merely a channel through which the will vents itself and works its havoc.

Faust's love is itself nothing but an expression of the divine force; that is why the question of its sincerity forms the crux of the tragedy. When Gretchen questions him about his religion, he replies by saying that he loves her.

'Nenn's Glück! Herz! Liebe! Gott!'

And yet Faust, who makes love and kindred expressions of the will his one and only religion, is precisely the man who is accused of insincerity in love. Critics almost all agree that his more inspired utterances concerning his love are to be put down as hypocrisy and 'the devil's game of lies'. In this they are themselves playing the devil's advocate; for it is Mephistopheles himself who in the Prologue compares man with a grasshopper which, in spite of all its attempts to jump up in the air, is reduced to croaking the same old song in the grass. Like Mephistopheles, the critics mistake a motive for an excuse, a motive moreover which—since it underlies the whole of the action—is the one thing that can explain everything and unite the varied episodes of *Faust* in one whole.

FFAIR Y WAUN

(*The Fair once held on the Moorland*)

They sold apples and geese and ponies
At the Fair upon the moor
On fine September mornings
Years and years ago.

They cursed and laughed and haggled
Until the deals were done,
And lifted pots of beer
Against the autumn sun.

O wily folk worked wonders
Upon the moor of old,
But the guineas lasted longer
Than they who bought and sold.

And now the moor is silent,
With rougher winds to freeze
The lips of a Rhymney poet
Making bargains with the breeze.

IDRIS DAVIES

THE KITE THAT'S SHOT

The kite that's shot forgets the soaring ease
Of days and wings ; closes his spreading girth
And rule of rigid pinion over earth

Relinquishing the wizardry of eyes
That fixed the field mouse trembling in the swathe,
The kite that's shot forgets the soaring ease
Of days and wings ; closes his spreading girth.

Living he shaped the wind's way to his use
And rode the air he kept his hunting path
Who now is stooped and struck by careless death.
The kite that's shot forgets the soaring ease
Of days and wings ; closes his spreading girth
And rule of rigid pinion over earth.

DONALD THOMPSON

A THOUSAND YEARS

BORIS PILNYAK

'Let the dead bury their dead.'

HIS brother, Constantine, arrived towards evening and talked that night with Vilyashev. He walked in, tall, thin, muffled in an overcoat with his kepi in his hand. They did not light the candles. They only talked for a short while, and Constantine went away almost immediately.

'She died quietly and peacefully. She believed in God. It's impossible to break away from what has been. One is surrounded by hunger, scurvy, typhus. People are like beasts. Utter depression reigns. As you see I'm living in a hut. The house has been taken over—it's a stranger's now. We are strangers and they are strangers.'

Constantine said shortly and quietly: 'There were the three of us in the world: I, you, and she, Natalya. *Finita*. I walked from the station and travelled in the pig-waggon. I couldn't get here in time for the funeral.'

'We buried her yesterday. She knew she was going to die. She didn't want to go out anywhere or leave this place.'

'She was an old maid. Her whole life was centred in this place.'

Constantine went out without a word of farewell. The next time the younger Vilyashev saw his brother was again in the evening—

they had both spent the whole day in wandering about the dry vales. There was nothing for them to talk about.

The sunrise was yellow and dull. Vilyashev noticed a golden eagle at sunrise on the barrow: the eagle was perched on the barrow's flat summit and was tearing at a dove: catching sight of Vilyashev it flew off into the waste of sky towards the west, sending a lonely, guttural cry over the spring fields. This lonely sorrowful cry remained in his memory long after.

From a hillock by the barrow one had a view for about ten miles all round, of meadows, young woods, villages and white belfries. A red sun appeared over the meadowlands and pink mists stole forward. A morning frost crisp with icicles hung about the hedges. It was spring, the sky hung in a deep blue cupola over the earth, kindly winds blew, exciting as half-dreams. The earth was swollen and breathed like a satyr. Migrating birds flew by night; at dawn the cranes called by the barrow and then their voices sounded glassy, transparent and mournful. The tumultuous abundance of spring was on its way—the unchanging and pre-eminent.

Bells tolled above the spring earth. Typhus, hunger and death walked the villages and huts. The blind huts stood as before. The blind huts stood as before, their rotten thatch waving in the wind as it had waved five hundred years ago when it was removed each spring and carried deeper into the forest, towards the west. There was death in each hut, in each someone in high fever lay under the ikons yielding up his soul to God in the manner of his life—quietly, cruelly and wisely. There was hunger in each hut. Each hut was lit with brands in the evenings and they struck their lights with flints as had been done five hundred years before. The living carried the dead to church and the spring bells tolled. The living in their confusion walked the fields in processions behind the cross, and round the villages, sprinkling them with holy water and blessing the hedgerows: they prayed for the corn and that they might be spared from death and the noise of the bells broke on the vernal air. But at twilight the songs of the young women still rang out: at twilight they came to the barrow in their bright home-spun garments and sang old songs, since spring was coming and the time was ripe for child-birth. The young men had left for the cruel war—now they were stationed near the Urals, near Ufa, near Archangel. This spring the old men would come out to plough the earth.

Vilyashev—Prince Vilyashev, his ancient race originated with the Monomach—stood downcast on the hill and gazed into the distance—a warrior. Thoughts there were none. He felt pain because he knew that everything was ended. Five hundred years ago perhaps, his ancestor stood as he now did, but with a sword, in a coat-of-mail, leaning on his spear: even his moustache was probably like Constantine's. He had everything before him. Natalya died from starving typhus: she recognised her death and welcomed it. Neither Constantine the eldest, nor he, nor Natalya the youngest, were needed. The nest lay ruined—the nest of the birds of prey. They had been a plundering people. The Vilyashevs

had been strong: now their strength was powerless.

Leaving the barrow Vilyashev set out for the river Oka, over ten miles away—he wandered about the whole day, walking over the fields and through the valleys—he was heavily-built, broad across the shoulders, with a beard down to his waist—a warrior. The snow still lay in the gullies and streams ran noisily in their rocky beds. The swollen earth stuck to his boots and the sky was warm and huge as it is in spring. The Oka poured itself out in a wide expanse. A wind passed over the river and there was a kind of dreaminess in the wind, as in the young Russian girl who has not yet experienced passion—one wanted to stretch and relax one's muscles; Vilyashev felt grief and a stirring half-sleep, an anxiety. A Russian feels nostalgia for distances, rivers beckon like wide roads to new places: the old blood was still alive. Vilyashev lay prone on the ground with his head on his hands, motionless. The hill above the Oka was bald and the wind caressed Vilyashev gently. Larks shrilled overhead. From the right, from the left, from behind, came the noise of birds, for the spring air carried all sounds clearly, but from the river a severe silence emanated and it was only at dusk that the echo of bells from over the water moaned above it and was carried for many miles along the river. Vilyashev lay a long time, downcast, motionless—a warrior plunged in gloom—then he got up swiftly and swiftly walked back. The wind caressed his beard.

He met his brother by the barrow. The sky was overspread with a leaden evening tinge, the young birches and firs below the barrow became ghostly and sombre. For a few minutes the whole world waxed yellow like a marsh plant, then it turned green and began to go blue quickly like indigo. A purple line gleamed in the west, mist crawled over the dale, geese cried as they flew past, a bittern moaned, and the silence of a spring night fell, that silence which does not lose a single sound but merges them into the expectant vernal drone—expectant as spring itself. His brother, Prince Constantine, was making straight for the barrow, a walking-stick in his hand. He reached it and began to smoke; the little light illumined his eagle-nose and bony forehead and his grey eyes shone, cold and calm like November.

'In spring, during the migrations, something draws a man away like a bird. How did Natalya die?'

'She died at daybreak, fully conscious; she lived unconscious hating and despising.'

'Look about you.' Constantine was silent a moment. 'I was thinking, tomorrow is the Annunciation! Look.'

The barrow was a dark stain, last year's grass barely rustled, air bubbled out of the earth, an earthen gas of some sort. A smell of rot went up. The sky beyond the barrow grew chill and the dale stretched out deserted and boundless. The air grew damper and colder. In the old days there had been a pathway through the valley.

'Can you hear it?'

'What?'

'The earth is groaning.'

'Yes, it's waking. Spring. Earth's joy.'

'No. I don't mean that . . . but mourning. It smells of rot. Tomorrow is the Annunciation, a great holiday. I was thinking, look about you. People have become crazed, savages—death, hunger, barbarism prevail. People have become crazed from horror and bloodshed. People still believe in God and carry the dead forth when they should be burned—and idolatry still exists. They still believe in satyrs, witches, in the devil and in God. People seek to rid themselves of spotted typhus with processions of the cross. I stood the whole way in the train to avoid infection. People think of nothing but bread. On the way I wanted to sleep but a lady in a little hat kept swimming before my eyes and she repeated rapturously that she was going to her sister's to drink a little milk. I felt nauseated, she didn't say "bread," "meat," "milk" but used all the diminutives. "My darling butterkins I shall eat you up!" Savagery, the people are becoming savage, the whole world is atavistic. Remind yourself of the history of all times and all peoples: sectarianism, chicanery, stupidity, superstition, cannibalism—not so long ago, in the Thirty Years War, there was cannibalism in Europe, they boiled and ate human flesh. . . Brotherhood, equality freedom. . . . If brotherhood must be brought in by force . . . then . . . better . . . do without. . . I'm lonely, brother. I feel grieved and lonely. How does man differ from the beasts?'

Constantine took off his kepi. His bony forehead was pale, greenish in the evening gloom, his eyes were sunken—for a moment the face resembled a skull, but the prince moved his head, glanced westward and his nose turned into a predatory hook: something birdlike, predatory, cruel, passed across his face. Constantine took a piece of bread from his coat pocket and passed it to his brother.

'Eat it. You're hungry.'

A bell could be heard tolling in the valley and dogs bayed loudly by the dwellings. The wind passed with a wide wing.

'Listen. I was thinking of the Annunciation. . . I pictured to myself how—slowly the red dawn broke in the east. Dreaming forests stood round, marshes and swamps. In the valleys and woods wolves howled. Waggons squeaked, horses neighed, people shouted—the wild Russian tribe had been to collect tribute and was now returning by the valley path from Oka to Desna and Sozh. Slowly the red evening sky began to glow. The Prince made his camp on the hill: the young prince, his son, was dying in the slow evening sunset. They prayed to the gods, burnt maidens and youths on the fire, threw people into the water to the water-spirit, called upon Jesus, on Perun, the Thunder God and the Blessed Virgin, to save the young prince. The young prince was dying, he died in the terrible spring sunset. Then they killed his horse and his wives, and made the barrow. Now in the Prince's camp there was an Arab, the learned Arab Ibn-Sadiph. He was in a white turban, lean as an arrow, supple as an arrow, dusky as resin, with the eyes and nose of an eagle. Ibn-Sadiph had mounted to Kama along the Volga to the Bulgars, and was now making his way from Russia through Kiev and Tsargrad.

Ibn-Sadiph was wandering over the world, since he had seen everything except countries and people. . . . Ibn-Sadiph climbed the hill; they were burning a pyre on the hill, on a log lay a naked girl with a gash in her left breast, the fire licked her feet, frowning bearded people with swords in their hands stood round, the ancient shaman priest circled in front of the fire and shouted frenziedly. Ibn-Sadiph turned and left the pyre, and walked down the valley road to the river. The sunset was growing dim. Legible stars were in the sky and legible stars were reflected in the water. The Arab glanced at the stars in the sky and at the stars in the water, always equally precious and phantom-like, and said: "Woe. Woe." Wolves howled over the river. That night the Arab went to the Prince. The Prince was supervising the feast for the dead. The Arab raised his arms to heaven, his white robes rose like wings, and he said in a voice like an eagle's cry: "This is the night when exactly one thousand years ago in Nazareth the Archangel told the Blessed Virgin of the advent of your God, Jesus. Woe. One thousand years!" So said Ibn-Sadiph. No one in the camp had heard of the Annunciation, of that bright day when a bird will not weave its nest. . . Do you hear brother? Bells are ringing. Can you hear how the dogs bark? . . . And over the earth as before come hunger, death, barbarism, cannibalism. I feel full of dread.'

Dogs barked at the bottom of the hill by the dwellings. The night grew more blue and colder. Prince Constantine sat back on his heels, leaning on his stick, but got up almost at once.

'It's late and cold now. Let's go. It's very uncanny. I don't believe in anything. Savagery. What are we? What are our sensations when savages surround us? It's lonely. I'm lonely, brother. No one needs us—not so long ago our ancestors gutted horses in the stables, took girls to bed on the wedding-night. I curse them too. Beasts. . . Ibn-Sadiph!' the prince shouted hollowly, bitterly, wildly, 'A thousand years. I shall probably go from here to Moscow on foot.'

'I have the strength of a warrior, Constantine,' Vilyashev said softly, 'I want to break, to uproot and they have dealt with me as with a child.'

The barrow was left behind. They walked along the hill. The abundant swollen earth clung to their shoes and hampered their movements. Bitterns called in the gloom, astride the night. A mist hung blue over the dale. They entered the village. It was silent. A dog barked behind the wall. They walked noiselessly.

'There's typhus and barbarism in each hut,' said Constantine, straining for sounds.

Beyond the huts on the road out of the village young women were singing the church troparion for the Annunciation. In the expectant spring evening the melody sounded solemnly simple and wise. And probably they felt that this troparion was unchanging as the spring was unchanging, with its law of birth. They stood a long while taking the weight off one soaked foot after the other. Both

probably felt that in spite of everything the clear blood flows in man's veins.

'Good. Mournful. This will not die,' said Vilyashev. 'It comes through the ages.'

'Wonderfully good. Strangely good. Fearfully good!' answered Prince Constantine.

The girls turned the corner in their bright skirts and passed by in orderly pairs, singing:

'Virgin Mother of God, rejoice! . . .
Blessed Mary, the Lord be with Thee. . . .
Blessed art Thou among women. . . .

It smelt of the damp, abundant, swollen earth. The girls walked slowly. The brothers stood there a long while and went off quietly. The midnight cocks were crowing. Over the hill rose the last crescent moon before Easter and threw deep shadows.

It was dark, damp and cold in the hut as it had been on the day of Natalya's death, when doors had banged unceasingly. The brothers went to their different rooms quickly, without talking or lighting the candles and Constantine lay down on Natalya's bed.

At daybreak Constantine roused Vilyashev.

'I'm going, good-bye. *Finita.* I shall leave Russia and Europe. They called our fathers birds of prey here: with their borzoi dogs they hunted wolves, people, hares. Woe. Ibn-Sadiph.'

Constantine lit the candle on the table and Vilyashev was amazed: across the white-washed wall, distorted by the blue light of dawn, fell his brother's blue shadow, incredibly blue, as if washing-blue had been spilt on the wall, and his brother Prince Constantine looked a corpse.

[April, 1919] *Translated by* BEATRICE SCOTT

THE CHAPEL ROOM

ELIZABETH BERRIDGE

LETTING rooms in the season was the usual thing in Glen Vyrnwy. When the air began to smell fresh and warm and the first days of May were only a few calendar leaves away for the tearing, families were compressed into two or three rooms. The one or two remaining had their valuables removed, were swept and scrubbed and polished ready for the fishermen who would stay maybe a week, maybe longer—at any rate, they would return every week-end throughout the whole summer.

Mrs. Davies at the Post Office was proud of her room. She looked it over and on second thoughts took away two brass ash-trays which were geometrically arranged on the piano top. Her hand went out hesitantly towards the marching rows of blue china jars on the modern brick fireplace, but she drew it back forgivingly and instead flicked a fold into the heavy curtain.

The Davies' did not need to compress themselves in the season. They had a largish house joined to the Post Office. They were kept busy enough, as Mr. Davies said, especially now the switchboard had been put in—but it was impossible to refuse a room to a fisherman, and look at the extra it brought in with no trouble at all.

When Mr. Bradshaw arrived Mrs. Davies was sure he would give no trouble. He was shown his bedroom and then led down to the ground-floor to see his sitting-room.

'You'll have your meals here,' said his landlady, caressing the room with her voice. 'This was the old chapel once, you know. We still call it the chapel room.' Noticing her visitor's glance towards the deeply alcoved fireplace, she nodded towards it. 'Over there was the pulpit and the Big Seat. Here's where the people sat. Fancy, all a hundred years ago and now it's my best parlour. Religion's grown since then, Lord be thanked.'

Mr. Bradshaw nodded. He was a slender sharp-nosed man; an accountant, so it was rumoured. He had light, sandy hair and a thin moustache of the same colour. He wore ginger plus-fours and suede shoes, and to prove he was a fisherman, not merely an accountant on holiday, he had stuck a fly in his lapel and another in his hatband. Sometimes he was lucky and sometimes not, but whether he came swinging through the village street with a dangling fish or two, or none at all, he always had a pleasant, rather shy nod for everyone—even the small rude boys who struck the passing cows to impress him and behind his back imitated his Birmingham accent. In the evenings Mr. Bradshaw gave out that he was reading in his sitting room, so when he had eaten his supper and given back the tray no one disturbed him.

Mrs. Davies was pleased with her lodger. She had no fault to find with him. No, none at all, she told her husband and her neighbours. He was such a nice quiet gentleman that one didn't like to complain. . . .

Oh, so there *was* something?

'Well, yes and no,' sighed Mrs. Davies when pressed one day. 'If you know what I mean,' she said, 'It's nothing a god-fearing person *could* complain of. And yet. . . .'

The shop was empty but for Mrs. Davies' closest friends, Mrs. Hughes the baker's wife and Mrs. Edwards the vet's lady. She leaned forward over the stamp-book impressively. 'Well,' she said 'He preaches to himself—every evening.' She looked at their amazed faces and called through the door at the back of the shop. 'Olwen, come a moment!'

The sound of a chair scraping back, of plugs pulled from the switchboard and a redhaired girl came unwillingly into the shop. 'What is it, mam?' she asked. It seemed as if at any minute an invisible wire would jerk her back to her enemy, the telephone.

'Olwen, just tell what you heard when you were on duty with that old thing last night. Oh, the girl hates it, don't you, Olwen?'

Olwen brightened: 'Well,' she said, 'I don't mind in the winter, it's company. It's the summer makes it like a chain on you. Anyway. Everything was quiet about nine o'clock when suddenly I heard a man's voice in the next room there.' She gestured to the wall behind Mrs. Davies. 'It went on and on, and I thought Mr. Bradshaw must have someone in with him,' struck by a thought she turned to her mother, 'I thought I'd heard the front door open and shut, mam, but you never can tell with that door. Well, nobody else said anything—'

'Did you hear what he was saying?' asked Mrs. Edwards eagerly.

'No,' said Olwen with regret, 'but I should say he was just preaching to himself. Lovely, it sounded. Quite different to his ordinary voice.'

The shop door clicked open and she hurriedly went back to the telephone which had started its weary ringing.

'And a quarter of peppermints, please,' said Mrs. Hughes loudly, 'a scandal it is to give sweet coupons for them.'

During the remainder of his stay Mr. Bradshaw noticed the improvement in his meals. And from time to time Mrs. Davies would pass a sly, approving remark.

'Ah,' she would say, 'But you were on good form last night, Mr. Bradshaw!' And Mr. Bradhsaw, with a guilty start would smile and hurry off down the street.

One afternoon he met the minister. He had just settled down in a quiet spot, out of the sudden wind that was one of the drawbacks to this part of the country, when an important rustle and creak told him that someone had just sat down by his side and was not going away.

'Do I disturb you, friend?' asked the minister.

'You disturb the fish, sir,' replied Mr. Bradshaw, for he was bold on one subject only, and that was fish.

'Ah ha!' said the minister with studied jocularity, 'are you casting the word of God upon the waters, friend?'

'That, sir,' replied Mr. Bradshaw, adjusting his line, 'would be rather out-of-the-way bait. I prefer the mayfly—failing that a fat worm.'

The minister surveyed him with interest.

'It is so in life, friend. Yes indeed. Fat worms lure the many. The word of God—' he shrugged, then looked more cheerful. 'I came to invite you to the centenary celebrations of our chapel. One hundred years ago this week was the Word received by the people of this village. Other chapels have sprung up since, but ours remains the oldest, largest and most constant.'

'Ah yes,' said Mr. Bradshaw, 'er, but why do you ask me to come? I am a stranger to your village, you cannot know if I am even of your denomination.'

The minister smiled slightly. It was so intimate that Mr. Bradshaw moved a little uncomfortably. 'Well, you should be interested for one reason alone,' he said, 'The very room you're in—your sitting room at Ty Gwyn—is where our chapel started.

Old John Morris preached there for years. Fiery old chap he was, my grandad told me. With a long ragged beard.'

Mr. Bradshaw had the line in his mouth, licking the end to thread it into a new fly. He kept it there, staring at the minister.

'A long ragged beard?' he repeated slowly.

'That's right,' said the other, nodding. 'Fine old chap, a rare preacher. Voice went through you, so people said, especially when he started off with his call *Who am I, O Lord God. . . .*' He laughed a little apologetically, then his voice took on its usual briskness. 'Well, think about it, friend. You might be called on to indulge your weakness, which, so Mrs. Davies tells me, is your *strength.* Good-day.' He went off over the rough grass, stumbling slightly in his thin-soled shoes. Mr. Bradshaw watched him go, frowning, until a sharp jerk at his line sent all thought of anything but fish out of his head.

A few days later he told Mrs. Davies he had to return home unexpectedly. She was regretful. 'And tonight's our centenary celebration,' she said. 'Refreshments after in the Hall. Can't you really stay? A gentleman like you—'

But Mr. Bradshaw said he had to go. He was due back at the office the next morning, a colleague had fallen sick.

As he sat in the train and looked out over the lower reaches of the river he had recently been fishing, he wondered once more about the contradictions in the Welsh border temperament. Who would have expected Mrs. Davies of all people to express such interest in his darts playing? And to be so tactful, knowing all about his slipping out after supper to the Pig's Head and not to say a word against it! As things turned out, it was just as well he hadn't stayed in—he'd never complained, but wasn't it a bit queer that old man walking straight in with never a greeting? What a beard he had on him, too! For a moment Mr. Bradshaw had a cold doubt, but in the bright sunniness of the carriage he dismissed it, and thought he might after all have stayed on that extra day. He'd have liked to see the minister start off the celebrations with a nifty double.

Mrs. Davies came home from the celebrations that evening greatly excited. It had all been a success, and she couldn't help feeling some of the glory reflecting upon herself, even though she *had* turned the pulpit into a fireplace. Still, the minister needn't have mentioned it, surely . . .

A little dashed, she twisted the key in the lock, and as if in benediction from the chapel room came the unmistakable up and down chant of an enthusiastic and practised preacher.

'*Who am I, O Lord God, and what is my house that Thou hast brought me hitherto?*'

'I wonder Mr. Bradshaw doesn't go in for it,' began Mrs. Davies, 'A pity it is——' But looking up at her husband she saw he was very pale and his trembling arm was suddenly no support to her.

'*In one hundred years Thy Word hath blossomed in the Land. I have borne witness to it. O Lord, Lord, Thy Goodness . . .*'

Mrs. Davies clapped a hand to her mouth, for she was remembering the unmistakeable evidence of her eyes. The 4.30 train, where it could be seen from the village street—and Mr. Bradshaw at the window of a first-class carriage, waving.

CHARLES WILLIAMS

JOHN HEATH-STUBBS

I HAVE no hesitation in stating my opinion that Charles Williams is one of the most important, as well as one of the most neglected thinkers and poets of our present century. At the time of his recent death his work was only just beginning to attract attention, though its development had been watched by a small circle over a number of years, and on that circle the influence, both of his ideas and his personality, had been more far reaching than is generally realised. His genius had a universality rare in any age, doubly so today. *The Figure of Beatrice* and *All Hallows Eve* will have made him known to many readers as a critic and as a supernatural novelist. But he was above all things a poet, and it is in his poetry, I believe, that his work finds its crown. The two books at present under review—a sequence of poems and a poetic play—will serve to illustrate the peculiar character of this poetry.

Yet more than one reader must have opened *The Region of the Summer Stars* (Nicholson & Watson, 6s.) and, finding himself utterly baffled as to its significance, closed the book with a feeling either of irritation or of disappointment. For this is difficult poetry, and it demands much from the reader if he is to gain anything at all from the perusal of it. The difficulty resides not so much in the form or in the obscurity of the symbolism—for Eliot and Dylan Thomas, whose verse has these characteristics, find many readers while Charles Williams is neglected. It is because the poetry has a quality peculiarly rare today. Hugh Sykes Davies, in his admirable Pelican book, *The Poets and their Critics*, points out that Spenser is uncongenial to modern readers largely because his poetry is genuinely philosophical, resting on a metaphysical system (a Christian Platonism) consistently worked out, and always clearly envisaged. Donne, on the other hand, appealed immensely to the inter-War decades. Intellectual though he is, he was really incapable of connected philosophical thought. He used metaphysical conceptions as playthings for his poetic fancy, but he had few firmly held convictions or beliefs. Williams' poetry, like that of Spenser, is founded upon a philosophical vision, imaginatively realised, and he too is largely a Christian Platonist. But there is this important difference. Spenser derived his philosophy from the common cultural stock

of the Europe of his time, and could to a large extent count on his readers' immediate response and intellectual sympathy. A poet who tried to do the same thing as Spenser today would find that stock hopelessly impoverished; his poetry would be academic, lacking an essential authenticity. *The Testament of Beauty* of Bridges, the last of the Spenserian poets, is an example of this. Williams' poetry is not of this order. His vision is the result of hard and individual striving. True, it is the vision once held in common by all Christendom, as seen from the point of view of an Anglican Catholic; but to attain it he has travelled the long road of intellectual and spiritual illumination by means of what he called 'the Romantic experience.' In his various prose works—theological, critical and creative—he went further, I think, than any writer since Wordsworth, in making known the nature of that experience. It is in them that the reader must seek for the key to the symbolism and mythology of his later poems. Then at last will he share in the vision which those poems seek to communicate; it is the vision of a great philosophical whole, like the organic body, the ideal Empire, image of the City of God on Earth, with all its parts and members singing together, which is described in *Taliessin through Logres*.

So much for the nature of this poetry in general. *The Region of the Summer Stars*, it must be noted, form a series of pendants or episodes to the poems which make up the earlier *Taliessin through Logres* in which the main themes of the myth were stated. Nevertheless, they often show a beauty and delicacy of imagery which is hardly found to the same extent in the former book, and many readers may find them easier to read as poetry. The problem which Williams set himself in his verse—the creation of a system of symbols at once intellectual and emotional, and the creation of a myth almost in the nature of epic—he largely, I think, but not entirely, solved in his later work. *The Region of the Summer Stars* shows him moving in the direction of a greater simplicity and of a less static conception of his myth.

The postumous play, *The House of the Octupus* (Edinburgh House Press, 5s.), was written at the request of the United Council for Missionary Education. It is a little difficult to judge what its effect would be when acted, but it shows certain signs, I think, of having been somewhat hastily written, and to order. I say this with diffidence, and do not of course intend any criticism of the body who commissioned it; on the contrary, I think they are entitled to our gratitude. Nevertheless, there is a certain vagueness and abstraction about the *mise en scene* of the play. Instead of a mythical six century Britain, as in the poems, or a modern England on which the supernatural impinges, as in the novels, we have a somewhat indefinite island, situate in 'the Outer Seas' in which a Christian community, newly sprung up, has to face invasion from P'o L'u—that Oriental despotism which, throughout the two series of 'Taliessin' poems, is used as a symbol for the antithesis of the City of God. The time is the present, and P'o L'u uses aeroplanes and machine-guns, but the author disclaims topical reference. In this setting, several

of the themes which Williams had treated of in his other work—such as the nature of Sorcery, and that which he called 'the Mystery of Substitution'—are finely worked out again, without anything very fresh being said about them. A more powerful dramatic motive is provided by the temptation of the priest, Anthony, and the psychology of his relation to his flock. *The House of the Octopus* is a powerful and moving play, but it is not to be compared with an achievement like the earlier *Thomas Cranmer of Canterbury*: it will be valued by all those who are admirers of Charles Williams, as perhaps the last thing we may hope to see from the pen of a great man.

SELECTED NOTICES

Charles Dickens. By Una Pope-Hennessy. (Chatto & Windus, 21s.).

The life of Charles Dickens was probably easier for John Forster to write than it has been for his new and most recent biographer, Dame Una Pope-Hennessy. It may be true that Forster had not the advantage of access to all his subject's letters which, in 1938, were so skilfully edited by Walter Dexter, but at least he knew Dickens personally; also, and this is the more important point, since then the standards of biography have altered. In the Victorian era it was still to a great extent the aim of the writer of any literary study to teach his readers both to be able to learn and to comment upon the art of composition. Accordingly his audience was for the most part far more academic than it is today: they were, in the best sense, students. However, with the universal literacy that followed as a result of Gladstone's and his successors' educational reforms there arose a new audience whose size made it such that the primary aim of the writer became one of pure elucidation: of teaching people how, rather than why, they read. These innovations were followed by 'book lovers' libraries' and series in which the 'living thoughts' of certain novelists, philosophers and theologians were presented: the desire for 'semi-popularised' biography was as contagious among writers as it was infectious among their readers. It is with regret, it must be recorded, that Dame Una's work falls into this latter category: and, in anticipation of such a verdict, it would seem the publishers have chosen a most suitable dust-jacket. It is a pity to have to make this admission, and doubly so since so little of any worth has been written on Dickens during the present century; admittedly there have been good short studies by Gissing, Chesterton and Orwell, David Cecil, Osbert Sitwell and Edmund Wilson, but there has been no full length estimate of the man and his works. The present life does not attempt a critical appraisal of the novels, and is largely historical in its treatment. But to hark back again to the question of modern biography. If one may refer to Quintillian it may be seen that in his examination of Greek poetry his purpose

was to teach his readers the art of Latin oratory, for which reason he selected certain Greek poets as possible models. A contemporary biographer is not blessed with so likeminded an audience. Indeed circumstances are such today, that the biographer must decide at the outset which way to go, and not vacillate, as Dame Una does, between two opposing factions, that of the success story and that of the imaginative portrait. The book meanders and, although much scholarship has obviously been packed into its pages, it lacks a cohesive pattern. Phrases such as 'the ordinary confidence of a man in his partner' and 'to go off the rails with an actress,' together with other similar vulgarities of style—including one or two mistakes in proper names: Mrs. Bardwell for Mrs. Bardell, and Marks for Monks—are lapses in syntax which can hardly go, as the publishers claim, to the making of a definitive life of Dickens.

Yet, in spite of preliminary disappointment, there are certain signs of a wide reading and careful analysis, for which the thanks of all Dickensian admirers are due. For instance, Lector's discovery (which was published in the *Manchester Guardian* on January 13th, 1943) in which it was stated that Mrs. Leo Hunter's 'Ode to an Expiring Frog' was, in all probability, suggested to Dickens by the poem 'To a Frog' to be found in *Specimens of British Poetry* published in 1823 is included in a chapter written on 'The Pre-American Books.' There is the interesting observation that 'Flora Finching's outpourings of things remembered and illusions evoked are a brilliant anticipation of James Joyce': there is the suggestion that the characters of Lucie Mannette, Estella, Bella Wilfer and Rosa Bud are his most genuine women since they were created after his relationship with Ellen Turnan; there is a pertinent remark about Little Nell's death, in which it is submitted that what is now bathetic was then pathetic, and that in order to understand the human heart 'we must enter the age which produced it.' For the same reason this may account why no English audience can ever find in Victor Hugo's play, *Ruy Blas*, anything more than magnificent bombast. It might be said here that the summaries of the novel-plots are unnecessary. Quotation—though there are admirable selections from *Our Mutual Friend* and *The Mystery of Edwin Drood*—would have been more satisfactory. One is tempted to think of the skilful use Mrs. Joan Bennett recently made of it in her book on Virginia Woolf. Another observation, which could probably be rewardingly pursued, is suggested when Dame Una asks whether Forster did not perceive that *Edwin Drood* contained the most biting criticism of all the novels, the despair of a civilisation rotting with the worship of a dead past. A more detailed treatment of this novel—as opposed to a summary—would have been helpful. The research of Howard Duffield in the *American Bookman* ('John-Jaspar—Strangler,' February, 1930) and Aubrey Boyd in *Humanistic Studies* (Volume IX) lends itself to the biographer since, as the latter maintains, Dickens was always interested in hypnotism—an interest of which several times in the present life under review a special point is made. But here as in other places, that final integration between the novelist and his

life is missing. Nowhere is it more noticeable than in the treatment of Dickens' married life.

Chesterton has suggested that a man of a poor family brought up in the Marshalsea slum area, who, being rich in personal ambition, on finding himself amid the prosperous Hogarth family of girls fell in love with the idea of falling in love. The contrast of memories of a blacking factory with the first delight of fresh femininity, often can intoxicate a mind. In such cases it is possible that though technically a marriage can be sublimated there need be no parallel marriage of true minds. Instead, it is conceivable (though Chesterton does not follow up this theory) that in such circumstances twenty years' later Dickens was still in love with the conception of being in love: in changing his allegiance from Kate to Ellen Turnan he could do so with a clear conscience, since his first marriage was merely that of an abstract nature, whereas his second relationship was a marriage of true minds which annulled his first vow. At this point it is worth recalling some of Dickens' conversations with Emerson and Carlyle: at one of these meetings he declared 'that incontinence was so much the rule in England that if his own son were particularly chaste, he should be alarmed on his account as if he could not be in good health.' If these remarks do not absolve their author, at least they have the merit of making his position understandable. As he had said himself 'she is aimable and complying, but nothing on earth would make her understand me.' And if his attitude to his wife, who in fifteen years had borne him ten children and had four miscarriages, was a harsh one, it must be remembered that the chance slamming of a door, or a harsh remark were enough in the case of a man of such a temperament to have the same effect as adultery would have in the breaking up of a marriage in that of a man of a less sensitive nature. Indeed, it is sad that Dame Una does not attempt to analyse the enormous strain on the imagination of such a literary output. Had she done so, perhaps she might have been able to fill in the gaps in her biography more successfully, since it is essential to examine the man's works in relation to his life, for they are but his shadow.

Whilst agreeing with Taine that there is much truth in his statement that Dickens was a landscape painter in prose, it seems profoundly untrue when the biographer cites with obvious admiration his remark that in the main the body of the work is styleless. In fact—with the exception of Newman and Hazlitt—it is hard to find in the nineteenth century a prose writer whose style is more individual. He is the one English novelist whose sense of humour is his most serious characteristic. Because he was able to create a fool such as Snodgrass, who is free, without making him into a serf, he has simultaneously baffled the European intellect and commanded its respect, that of Taine included. His works epitomise all the glories of the illogical, stupid, lovable English. In his first work one finds that wit that never flagged until the very end. 'What an interesting book a hackney coach might produce, if it could carry as much in its head as it does in its body! The autobiography of a broken-down

hackney coach would scarcely be as amusing as the autobiography of a broken-down hackney dramatist.' This quotation coming from *The Sketches of Boz* reveals that particular balance in Dickens' style, parts of which, Saintsbury was to discover later, might be scanned as blank-verse: also in the same sketches one finds a similar instinct for the *mot juste*. When writing of visiting Newgate prison, he says that to mention every gate that was unlocked for him to pass through would require a gate at every comma. Finally, in his last unfinished work, taking the sentence 'What is prettier than an old lady—except a young lady . . . ?' one still finds persistent that undying sudden turn of optimism in his phrasing whose parallel has never since been achieved by any other English novelist. In this lies the quiddity of the genius of Dickens.

A Coat of Many Colours. By Herbert Read. (Routledge, 8s. 6d.).

Herbert Read's latest book, *A Coat of Many Colours*, is a collection of some seventy short essays, written during the past twenty years, on a variety of subjects, literary, artistic and political; sometimes brilliant, often provocative, and always penetrating, they are, on a small scale, a cross-section of his thought and writing in all three spheres, and they therefore constitute a convenient dispersal point from which to begin an examination of his work and achievement, not only as an essayist, but also as critic, poet and philosopher.

Despite the diversity of themes, the essays in this book fall, for the most part, into two categories. There are the more general essays, either discussing wide subjects in the universal terms of artistic criticism or political conviction, or describing, in personal terms, the effect on the writer of some work of art; it is to these essays that the first sentence of the quotation from C. F. Ramuz that prefaces the book seem most applicable: 'Continuer à être etonné; continuer à être neuf et jusqu'au bout devant ce qui est neuf: car tout est neuf pour qui est neuf.' Read never fails to find an unusual approach to every subject, and to explore it with a consistent freshness of outlook: never forgets to bring an innocent eye to view a picture, or to estimate the value of a poem. That it is almost impossible to write briefly without making generalisations is obvious, but he is not afraid to generalise: indeed, he regards it as 'the only vital kind of mental activity, even when it is wide of the mark.' It is this admitted boldness of approach that makes his generalisations both stimulating and controversial, but his tolerance, and his complete lack of fanaticism, guard him from ever becoming merely dogmatic. One can disagree, but one is never irritated.

One of the most interesting of these essays is an original, short study of 'The Poetry and Prose of Painting,' which contains in a few, brief, pointed sentences a penetrating comparative definition of the nature of prose and poetry, and an application of this definition to painting, even going so far as to illustrate various types of poetic form in the work of certain painters—for instance, the epic in Delacroix, the ode in Poussin, and the sonnet in Cézanne. A good

many of these essays are devoted to questions discussed more analytically and at greater length in Read's books on the relation of art to society, industry and education: here he treats various aspects of these themes in such essays as 'Art and War,' 'Art and the People,' 'Vulgarity' and 'The Language of the Eye.' These essays are perhaps the least successful in the book: despite neat phraseology and pertinent observations, they do not really respond to the brief treatment accorded to them, and here pithiness of style is apt to lead to apparent contradiction rather than to clarity. At the end we are left with a series of bare, if clever, definitions, and although we feel certain that Read would be able to clothe them with illustrations, and interrelate them to form a coherent unity, on the face of it they seem fragmentary and even incompatible.

The first essay in the book is a refreshing personal record of the discovery of an exquisite miniature bronze in a Florentine museum, written with that characteristic innocence and simplicity of outlook which the author himself possesses, and for which he constantly pleads. It is in this essay that his prose-style, now freed from the language of argument and didactic criticism, shows best those qualities of imaginative sensitivity and rhythm that distinguished his allegory, *The Green Child*. Another essay inspired by this same delight of the innocent eye is that on *Doctor Faustus*, the keynote of which is provided by the opening sentence: 'I am afraid I cannot lay claim to any expert knowledge of *The Tragical History of Doctor Faustus*, but only to an exceptional love of it': it is this love for Marlow's 'sense of glory' which comes straight from Read's heart, and gives him an insight into the dramatist denied to more academic students of his work.

Yet, as absorbing and readable as the general essays are, it is the second type of essay—the individual study—at which Read excels. Some of these essays are very short—one on Coleridge is, indeed, only half a page—but he admits that he has 'a characteristic preference for the miniature—for the epitome, the episode, the epigram,' and this statement qualifies him to be an essayist whose brevity is his most remarkable feature. There are virtually only two ways in which an artist or philospher can be treated briefly: one is for the critic to take a particular facet of his work or thought, and analyse it fully. This method has the inevitable drawback of being one-sided; studying a single aspect of a man's development nearly always involves turning a blind eye to certain facts, and must result in an over-emphasis that can reveal but a half-truth. Read's method is directer and more masterly. He cuts away the fabric of environment and influence, all the theories and gossip that surround the life and work of an important artist, and attempts to penetrate to the very joints and marrow, to the bone structure of his subject, and to find the seed that made the whole individual grow and flourish. There are many artists and thinkers treated in this way in the book—to name James Joyce, Klee, Eric Gill, Havelock Ellis, Verlaine, Hopkins and T. E. Hulme is to mention but a few. Perhaps one of the most interesting studies is that of Wordsworth, with particular

reference to that quality of remorse which Read found in him in his earlier, and longer, work on the poet. This theory, extreme as it is, bases the whole of Wordsworth's development on his passion for Annette, and regards the intellectual changes in his mind as consequences of the emotional; Read finds his confirmation of this theory in the significance of the work done by Wordsworth between 1792 and 1797–8, and the brief and cogent quotations which he offers support his theory well.

On the artistic side, perhaps the most sympathetic of many essays is an excellent study of Henri Rousseau, who has been for many years a much misinterpreted painter. We are accustomed to hear Rousseau referred to as 'Le Douanier,' implying that his painting was a mere hobby, a side-line to his profession. Read refutes this idea, and penetrates deeply to the source of Rousseau's talent; he finds the significance of the painter in his affinities with folk-art: Rousseau, he says, was above all a grown-up child; his achievement he describes as essentially sensuous; his work 'an oasis in our desert' of a divided civilisation and a schismatic culture.

Writing at greater length, he includes an essay on Kierkegaard, which is remarkable for its entire lack of dependence on the psychological jargon that has distinguished recent studies of the philosopher. This is, indeed, probably the most significant essay in the book: whether we agree with Read that Kierkegaard's treatment of Regine Olsen 'merely reveals to what fantastic heights (admittedly *heights*) the aberrations of the human spirit can reach,' and 'that in the end they lead to "the religious absolute" can scarcely justify the wanton sacrifice of another person's feelings,' or whether we consider this to be a misreading of the imperative need for Kierkegaard to find the 'religious absolute,' we must admit that this study penetrates with far greater insight into the heart of Kierkegaard's Christianity, and his failure to equate it with either human love or the organised Church, than can any study that depends solely on a psychological interpretation of his attitude, or that views it entirely from within the bounds of orthodox Christianity. Read feels, as he shows in another essay, great sympathy for Kierkegaard's attitude towards the organised Church, and, despite the existence in him of a strong principle very much akin to the Christian creed, he denies the validity of a Church which claims any power over men. This desire to escape from all power, to find complete freedom for every man from all forms of organised life, is part of his faith in anarchism, a faith that is most clearly expressed in his book, *Poetry and Anarchism.*

Writing on Herbert Read in *Horizon*, Graham Greene adopted the attitude towards his anarchism that it was sometimes little more than an attempt to show his Marxist critics that he, too, was a political animal. One may suspect, in the light of Read's views on Communism, and his belief in the need to take part in all contemporary movements, that this criticism has some justification, but it can be no more than a partial truth: despite his own assertion that he sees no reason why anarchism should be denied the name of politics and called philosophy, Read's belief in it amounts to a religious faith—

to a philosophy of life more thoroughgoing than any political creed. Yet, as deeply as one must respect his integrity, and as sincerely as one may endorse his condemnation of totalitarianism—whether of the Fascist, Communist or any other brand—this book must remain an utopia as unattainable at the present time as that described in the last section of *The Green Child.* He realises on what score he is likely to be criticised, but he fails to refute the claims of his critics, and can only take refuge in the assertion that he, at any rate, believes sufficiently in the intrinsic good of humanity to make anarchism possible.

The allegory of *The Green Child*, or at least the first section of it, must be accounted among the most exquisite of Read's creative works. The prose throughout this deeply-moving book more than passes the test that he himself sets as the criterion in his essay on 'English Prose': 'Good prose must have a pace: it must step like a well-bred horse: each word must strike with clean precision and must advance with a continuous rhythm,' but only the first section contains the evocative imagery and symbolism that makes this one of the most perfect narratives in English literature, as well as Read's greatest artistic achievement. Beside it must be set the first part of his *Annals of Innocence and Experience*, originally published as *The Innocent Eye*, a sensitive, finely-written evocation of a Yorkshire childhood, lived in the terms of the Farm, the Foldgarth and the Mill, the Orchard, the Stackyard and the Church. Although its sequel, *The Falcon and the Dove*, is a memorable and often deeply-moving account of the years that followed, the effect of study in a provincial university and war service in France, the influences of town-life, and an increasing preoccupation with Socialist politics and Freudian psychology, even if they did not blunt his sensibility, took Read very far from what Graham Greene has called 'the fine simple stony architecture of his childhood' on 'a rather dusty pilgrimage towards a dubious and uninteresting conclusion.' Whether or not one agrees that the conclusion was dubious and uninteresting, one must admit that the pilgrimage has often been dusty; yet he has managed all along the way to preserve his "innocent eye,' even if its image has at times been a little blurred, and to remember, in his own words, that 'in spite of my intellectual pretensions, I am by birth and tradition a peasant.'

For Herbert Read, both as a man and, more especially, as a poet, the war years of 1914–1918 were perhaps the most crucial. Throughout his work there is an instinctive horror of violence—dating from before the war—that proves the hardness of his task of fighting, and the profound effect that such a task must have had on his mind. Despite the fact that he once said that it was not for him, as a poet, to condemn war, every war poem which he has written is a poignant indictment of man's inhumanity to man. Probably the best of his poems is 'The End of a War,' which has been compared in structure to a quartet, and in which the musical analogy is certainly very apparent, each section providing, in the forms of dialogue or meditation, a sequence of ideas akin to the thematic material of a movement.

To assess his achievement as a poet is a far more difficult task than to estimate his importance in other spheres: a judgment of poetry is, whether we care to admit it or not, so much a matter of intuitive feeling. That he has a poet's vision is undoubtedly true: without that he could never have written 'The End of a War,' 'A Song for the Spanish Anarchists,' with its fine and romantic pictorial imagery, and 'September Fires,' to quote but three poems among many. Yet, when Newbolt described his war poems as containing 'a surgery hardly to be endured' he came very near (though perhaps not intentionally: Newbolt was a great admirer of Read's poetry) to the heart of the problem not only of his war poems, but of all his poetry. Read has the vision, the image, the intensity of feeling necessary for the poet, but in his surgery his incision is too deep: he cuts the flesh away too close to the bone. One may, with Henry Treece, call this 'poetic honesty,' but it still deprives his poetry of final greatness.

In the sphere of art criticism, Herbert Read has done yeoman's service both as a writer on the general aspects of art and society, and as a defender of all modern movements from Superrealism to Constructivism. In the former task, he has insisted continually on the need for a re-emphasis of the close relation between art and life, and has pleaded for a recognition of the truth of Eric Gill's dictum that an artist is not a special kind of man, but every man a special kind of artist. In the words of S. Thomas Aquinas, he believes that 'every artist intends to give his work the best disposition; not absolutely the best, but the best as regards the proposed end; and even if this entails some defect, the artist cares not: thus, for instance, when a man makes himself a saw for the purpose of cutting, he makes it of iron, which is suitable for the object in view; and he does not make it of glass, though this be a more beautiful material, because this very beauty would be an obstacle to the end he has in view.'

As a champion of all types of modern art, Read has been condemned both by those who dislike and distrust it, and by those who preach one particular theory, whether it be that of Superrealism, Cubism, Constructivism or any other school. Graham Greene has accused him of merely wishing to be contemporary; as far as it goes this accusation is true, but what Graham Greene has failed to realise is that Read *enjoys* modern art more than the art of any other period, because he finds, in his own words, that 'only in works of art contemporary with my own experience of life do I feel fully aware of all their potentialities.' Tradition, for him, is not a heritage from the past, but an organic, vital, ever changing element. It is in this spirit that he condemns academic art that has lost any creative vitality, and defends and explains every modern movement, and assigns it a place in the history of artistic creation. And whatever one's tastes in art, one must admit that he has good reasons for his case. On the other side, he is condemned as being too vague, too ready to appreciate anything, whatever its style and origins. In an Epilogue to *Art Now*, he justifies this attitude, taking Picasso to support him: 'If I find myself admiring artists so diverse as Picasso,

Mondrian, Klee and Max Ernst, I do not suspect the relativity of my æsthetic sensibility, or try to reconcile such experiences with some theoretical canon of beauty. In matters of art I respect my intuitions, and realise that these intuitions cannot be rationalised in any particular case.'

His theory of the intuitive appreciation of art is based very largely on Freudian psychology, as is a great deal of his criticism of the individual artist. Here, although one may support his theories of intuition, it is often difficult to agree with his conceptions of psychological determinism: the most that can be said is that Read, for all his agnosticism, believes in the life of the spirit as genuinely as any Christian, and it is therefore possible to accept the one without the other. The difficulty for him has been to reconcile a 'sense of glory' and a belief in spiritual values, with a dislike of religion, as such, and therefore of any orthodox Christian creed. He realises the value of faith only too well:—

> 'Happy are those who can relieve
> Suffering with prayer
> Happy those who can rely on God
> to see them through.
>
> They can wait patiently for the end,'

but the only faith that he has is in man, and this faith is of small consolation in the chaos of the modern world:—

> 'But we who have put our faith
> in the goodness of man
> and now see man's image debased
> lower than the wolf or hog—
>
> Where can we turn for consolation?'

Because Christianity is for him no longer a living force, the dissolution of the human image is all the more appalling. He cannot believe in the idea of a Christian society, and yet he knows that without an animating faith as strong as the Christian religion in the Middle Ages, man is doomed. It is out of this conflict that his best work has been born.

The Cloth of Flesh. By Séan Jennett. (Faber & Faber, 6s.).

There is a sombre magnificence about this second volume of poems, with more than a touch of the quality of Donne: like Lear's hand, it smells of mortality. Behind every sensation and experience lies the brooding fact of death—

> A bone sang how even the living wear
> the cloth of flesh for temporary grace,
> sang how the smiling or the angry face
> is listed in the catalogue of death.

Or again, in the poet's own words, 'the danger of a world at war lies over all.' And the poetry is the pity, to use Wilfred Owen's phrase, the pity and the terror of the brute fact of evil: this native curse